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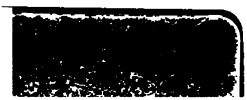

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OF

STEPHEN OLIN, D.D., LL.D.,

LATE PRESIDENT OF THE WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY.

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THESE volumes are published in compliance with a very general desire on the part of those who were acquainted with the late President Olin. The materials have been selected mainly from his manuscripts, and are given to the public with such corrections only as were deemed necessary for the full expression of the author's sentiments.

With the exception of the Discourse on the Death of the late Mrs. Garrettson, and that on the Early Training of Children, none of the sermons in this volume were designed by the author for publication. Some of them, it will be seen, are mere sketches, and lack that elaborate finish which distinguishes articles prepared by himself for the press. It is supposed they will not be the less acceptable on that account. They are full of thought, and suggestive; presenting a good idea of the forcible style and earnest manner of one who stood among the foremost in the first rank of impressive and effective preachers of the Gospel.

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I.

FAITH IN CHRIST THE GREAT WANT OF THE SOUL.

Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God—believe also in me.—JOHN, xiv., 1.

THE word *believe*, in the original, has in both instances the same form, and the sentence might have been rendered, "Believe in God—believe also in me," imperatively; or affirmatively in both: "Ye believe in God—ye also believe in me;" or, as in the English text, the first affirmatively, "Ye believe in God;" the last imperatively, "believe also in me." Whichever form is adopted, the meaning is so modified by the previous clause, "Let not your heart be troubled," as to convey the same idea—*the insufficiency of faith in God alone, and the need of faith in Christ, to dissipate the fears and satisfy the wants of the soul of man.*

Travelers have reported of some inconsiderable barbarous tribes that they have no idea of a supreme power, the Maker and Ruler of men and of all things. Such reports are probably incorrect, or, if true in a few instances, these are exceptions to what may, with sufficient exactness, be denominated the universal belief in God.

A great many processes of argumentation have been stated as fully justifying, and as having probably led to, this unanimous consent of mankind to the great fundamental truth of religion. They have educed it, it is said, from the relation of cause and effect. Every object and every fact around us

has been produced by some cause or agent, and that by some other more remote, and so on up to a first cause, which must needs be the self-existent God. Another process, less complicated and elaborate, which has therefore been thought by many to lead to the universal belief in question is this: I feel myself hemmed in and limited in the use of all my powers of body and mind. It is the same thing, whether I use my intellect, my senses, or my limbs. I can proceed a little way, and then I press against a barrier. I am shut up within the finite, and I feel that I am. Now this sense of the finite, say the metaphysicians, unavoidably suggests the idea of the infinite. This painful apprehension of the limited sphere of human capabilities suggests thoughts of the illimitable. My own scanty knowledge and feeble energies throw me upon the contemplation of omniscience and omnipotence, and thus necessarily lift me up to the great idea of a God in whom these high attributes reside. Now all this may be true, and I see no objection to such statements, considered merely as arguments. It may be, however, that the human mind reaches the conclusion by some briefer process, or by no process at all. It may be an instinct of our nature to believe in the existence of the Author of our being—that faith in God is a first principle imbosomed in our very nature, and that unbelief is the real product of speculation. It seems to me that Atheism, which denies the existence of God, and Pantheism, which imbues all things and all secondary causes with divinity, are not the spontaneous growth of the human mind, but of philosophy, falsely so called.

This belief in God, however attained, is not adapted to satisfy the religious wants of man, but rather to fill his bosom with profound anxieties. The moment this great truth is admitted as something more than a pure abstraction, it be comes most startling and alarming. The thought of being in the world along with the God of the universe, its Creator, absolute in authority, irresistible in power, and profoundly

mysterious in his attributes, purposes, and modes of dealing with his dependent creatures, is, to every one who lifts up his soul to the reception and contemplation of it, absolutely terrific and appalling.

It is "the eternal power and Godhead" of Jehovah that are chiefly disclosed by the works of creation. These attributes tend more to produce terror than to impart consolation and awaken confidence and hope. Nations left to the light of nature seek to avert the anger and enmity of Deity by sacrifices and sufferings, and but seldom indulge in love and gratitude.

Creation and Providence do not teach us God's benevolence. The beauties of nature, the enjoyments of life, might be so understood but for contradictory teaching from convulsions, barrenness, famines, pestilence, poverty, anxieties, disappointments, death. Upon the whole, our present condition can not be reconciled with the belief in God's benevolence, without reference to a future state, to which our present mode of existence holds the relation of a probation. And these are doctrines which the light of nature does not reveal.

Natural arguments for the soul's immortality, though of some value to enforce and illustrate the doctrine as revealed in Christ, are of no worth out of that connection. The strongest of these are,

1. The nobler powers of the mind, adapted to higher pursuits and contemplations. Yet, in most cases, these powers are little developed—hardly enough to fit men for their duties—and they tend to things sensual and worldly so generally and strongly as to lead to the belief that they are only destined to live for the present.

2. The continual progress of the soul in knowledge and virtue; and yet, in the natural course of things, the mind declines with the body as old age comes on, and seems extinct with death.

3. The strong desire for immortality. Yet other desires

still stronger—those for life and happiness—are disregarded in God's administration. Life and immortality were brought to light by Christ, and were only guessed at by the heathen; and there is nothing in mere Theism to satisfy the soul that it shall exist after death; or, if it does, that existence can be otherwise than wretched. Men are pushed up to the brink of the grave with no light beyond—doubtful, at best, of all beyond. The vast procession of humanity, swept on by an invisible fate, plunges into a midnight gulf. Generation after generation disappears, and no one knows their destiny. We look above, around to men, onward to the departed, to all in vain, for a solution of our dreadful doubts. No voice is heard. It is a still and dark domain, that of death. Is the soul to think, to feel, to joy, to suffer, to hope, to aspire no more? Is all to return to dust? Will the uplifted arm of God crush the spiritual as it demolishes the material? Will there be no more imaginings—sleeping, waking visions? no more communings with those we love? no greetings? no sympathies? The deep struggling of the soul against depravity and corruption—the hungering and thirsting after the true, the pure, the lovely—was it all for naught? Does it end here? Shall this struggle be the end of me? the gloomy pit of corruption be my home evermore, and make me the equal—the victim of the loathsome worm, that but to-morrow shall begin his feast upon my flesh? Has the wisdom of man, has the experience of the entire race, has the religion of nature—Theism or Deism—has any but God, has God out of Christ any answer for these interrogatories of a dying, despairing race? No! there is no answer. Earth, and the shades below, and heaven above, deny all response—all hope to the soul in its hour of suspense, and agony, and doom. And here we are driven forward, an unwilling herd, toward this fatal limit—looking for light, and there is no ray; calling for help, and there is no answer!

This horror of being nothing would be the grand evil;

this suspense as to the future would be the natural and fierce plague of the soul under the circumstances supposed, and which must cling to our very being without the aid of the Gospel.

In some minds, the question of immortality has received a partial solution. Doubt, if not hope, has possibly taken the place of absolute despair. Let us suppose the light thus attained by a few to be general or universal; that through philosophy, or tradition, or innate teachings, the mystery were quite chased away, or that an audible voice proclaimed from heaven, "Ye shall live forever. The body even shall revive, and the soul shall be immortal." Would such a faith satisfy the human mind? It would satisfy one demand of our nature and condition, but it would awaken new anxieties harder to allay or appease. Who can feel the import of the announcement, You shall exist evermore? Under what conditions? With the same infirmities, liabilities, wants, tendencies, aspirations? Exposed, as here, to pain, loss, disappointment, toil? Surrounded, as here, with temptations, dangers, foes? with wicked men? What joys are there really adapted to the soul's wants? I have tried wealth, luxury, ambition; and in less than threescore years and ten, have lost my relish for them. Friends have deceived. Success has palled upon me. All is vanity and vexation of spirit. Is there no better lot nor hope? Then death were better than life, and an untimely birth than endless being.

We must spend this eternity in the domains of an eternal, omnipotent God. We tremble at this association. We have no ascertained relations with the Almighty One. There is no covenant between us. What are his dispositions toward us? We have known much of his severity and his judgments. Will he make my eternal lot happy or wretched? Perhaps wretched. The cup of human misery has even run over in his presence. Most are poor. Many suffer clear through this state of existence. May they not through the

next? The best men often suffer most here. What security is there for the future?

Admit, now, the idea that man is alienated from God by sin, and nothing more is wanting to complete his despair. God's justice, then, requires our misery; his holiness, our banishment from his presence. There is in this Deistic dispensation no place for repentance. We see vice and sin left to produce their own consequences, and God does not interfere in compassion. Intemperance, prodigality, debauchery lead always to evil, often to ruin here; and we can only infer from the things seen that so it will be through eternity. Remedies, interpositions to rescue, mediation, substitution, pardon, all are unknown where Christ is not.

These considerations and statements expose the wants which a fuller, brighter dispensation is required to satisfy. Deism—"faith in God"—is adapted to awaken, not to calm our fears; to trouble the heart, not to assuage its griefs and anxieties. It may be a co-worker with the law. It may disclose our wants and perils. It may even bring us to Christ, but has no sufficiency to satisfy or save.

"Believe also in me," is the complement of the text, which quite provides for all the contingencies and necessities of our moral and spiritual nature—all the wants which this train of reflections has suggested, and all that are liable to be felt or encountered by man in his endless career.

Nature teaches only the "eternal power and Godhead" of the Almighty—his terrible majesty, and his ability to destroy as well as aid us. Christ teaches that "God is love;" that he "careth for us;" that not a hair of our heads falls without him; "that like as a father pitieth his children," so does God pity his creatures; that he is indeed our Father.

Death, "the king of terrors," the abhorrence of our nature and of natural religion, becomes, under the economy which "brings life and immortality to light," an open door into the

world of glory. Death has lost his sting—he is a conquered enemy.

The Gospel dispensation explains whatever is anomalous and unintelligible in our present condition. The labors, the anxieties, the disappointments, the mortifications, the bereavements, the sufferings that make up our history here are all clearly interpreted. These, to an irreligious mind, are wholly inexplicable upon any theory which stops short of rejecting a superintending Providence altogether, or which, indeed, does not go the length of absolute atheism, and leave the affairs of this world, so far as they transcend the grasp of mere human control, to the ministrations of blind, mindless accident. Many good men, too, who are far from calling in question the divine prerogative of God, and would shudder at the thought of dwelling in a world where he does not reign over all, are yet grievously puzzled with this class of phenomena. Conscious of their own demerits, of the justice of every chastisement that falls upon them, they are yet left to wonder why, if God is merciful, and they are his friends and his children, little or no distinction should be made between them and his open foes. They draw inferences not unfavorable to the divine mercy or veracity, but to their own real character and relation to God. They write bitter things against themselves, and conclude that they are bastards and not sons, because they have part in afflictions whereof all are partakers. I am not stating an imaginary or an unfrequent case in human experience. It is a view of God's administration upon which multitudes dwell habitually, and which has shed its saddening influences upon many passages in almost every good man's history. It is the natural fruit of a narrow, imperfect, deistic faith. Now faith in Christ—a simple, hearty reception of the whole truth as it is in Jesus—offers not some palliation of this chief trouble of so many sincere hearts, but a positive and satisfactory solution of the whole difficulty. Each of the hundred texts in

the New Testament which teach us that suffering here is rather disciplinary than punitive, and that temporal afflictions are busy in working out for good men, who walk not after the flesh, the most excellent spiritual and eternal results, teaches a philosophy in the light of which all doubt vanishes away, and all contradictions find reconciliation. We have here the true theory of the world under God's administration—the basis of a *system* in which every intelligible fact, every dark event, the entire chaos of human affairs, have their appropriate place, and become explicable in perfect harmony with the divine attributes, and with man's nature and destiny. All appearance and suspicion of accident, or chance, or blind destiny vanish away at the coming in of this evangelical faith; and all the disappointments, and disasters, and sufferings of men, and all the confusion, and crash, and wreck of external things, stand revealed in the light of this large, divine philosophy as a vast apparatus for the production and culture of those high moral virtues which shall be in request in the society and services of heaven. Whatever may be the kind, or degree, or duration of a good man's sufferings, this last and proper view of the Christian dispensation is always sufficient to calm his anxieties and silence all complaints. It is God's chosen way to make men holier on earth and happier in heaven. It is idle, it is hardly innocent, to talk of the *mysteriousness* of such providences. They constitute an important part of God's revealed and predestined plan for saving the world and refitting our fallen souls with such virtues and capabilities as are best adapted to a heavenly career. Every position in life, each mode of suffering, each sphere of acting, becomes a favorable point for the development of Christian virtues. The poor man's poverty, the sick man's suffering, the rich man's affluence, the wise man's knowledge, constitute occasions or instruments for promoting the highest conceivable ends of the divine administration. All apparently fortuitous changes are

only so many conjunctures divinely appointed for the profitable exercise or honorable manifestation of those gracious attributes with which the Gospel will enrich and beautify its disciples.

It is meet and right, and our bounden duty, to welcome such views of the Gospel, and to stir up our spirits to the exercise of such a faith. It is the high privilege of every good man to go forth under the inspiring and assured conviction that all things work together for his good; that light afflictions here will certainly add to the exceeding weight of eternal glory; and that, if he is led on by an invisible hand through the deepest waters and the hottest fires, it only betokens a more splendid triumph and a higher destiny, and should admonish him to lift up from depths that have come over his soul a louder cry unto God, and to urge through the thick clouds beyond which the divine presence dwells concealed the acclamation of a braver faith, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

Here I could wish that I had a moment to contrast with the divine system which I have so imperfectly developed—the system which regards all physical and social good and evil as instrumental in the production of great moral results with that mere worldly philosophy which esteems these only as the accidents and anomalies attendant on what is called human progress—a theory which can give no better account of the revolutions and sufferings of the race in all past time than that they have developed great principles in government and art, and the economy of life; and that they tend to a consummation already visible in the dim future, in which the masses shall be well fed, taught, and governed—in which China shall enjoy trial by jury, and Russia universal suffrage. How worthy of a wise, merciful God is the former view, making all things promotive of holiness and happiness! How heartless and worldly the last, which accounts of immortal men and of past generations as of the rank vegeta-

tion that grows and decays to fatten the soil for a better crop!

The Gospel also satisfies the anxious inquiries of the soul with regard to its moral obligations, relations, and tendencies. It answers the momentous question, What does God demand of us? Its announcements on these points are, indeed, sufficiently repulsive and appalling. As to all moral interests, it declares that we are hopelessly ruined. The Almighty is our enemy—we are his enemies. We are without strength or power to relieve us and the curse—the wrath of God abides upon us. Repentance can not atone for the past, or insure acceptance for the future. No efforts of any sort can bring us upon a better footing. So radical is the moral defection, that, do what we will, we can not obey or love—we can not even desire to do so; so that the alienation from God, and banishment from all holy associations, and all elevating, spiritual pursuits and enjoyments, result no less from our own dispositions and tendencies than from the divine justice. Such announcements from the "God over all" are truly calculated to "trouble the heart;" but when danger is real and imminent, any thing is better than false security —than to sleep on the brink of ruin. The soul would know the worst of its prospect. Effort, even when vain, ministers a temporary solace, and the human mind would rather look its fearful destiny in the face, and even make a covenant with hell, than be surprised into it.

Surely no homily upon sin and the sinner's doom was ever half so appalling and effective as a silent contemplation of the great catastrophe upon the cross. We see God's abhorrence of sin—what an odious, terrible element it is in his moral system. The dignity, the suffering, the condescension of the holy victim—what do they teach but God's utter abhorrence of our moral character? his irreconcilable opposition to man in his present false position? The agony of the Garden is a more fearful manifestation of this than the dam-

nation of the entire race, of which it is a kind of epitome. How deep the stain, how desperate the malady which called for such an interference! I think this view of sin, if fairly entertained, would be strictly intolerable—overwhelming to the human soul. We need preach no more about the atrocity and danger of sin, could we induce men to look upon the exhibition of its consequences as seen upon the cross.

The cross teaches another lesson. It "troubles" the heart by a fearful manifestation of God's hatred of sin, but it inspires hope by the provision which it makes for the sinner. Why this sacrifice? It had been easy to apply a cheaper remedy, to destroy, to cut off the tainted race of men. This costlier plan speaks of God's compassion for the sinner. He hates sin, but will save the transgressor. It is not wrath, wholly or chiefly, that is manifested. No. "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This shows his disposition toward the sinner. He will make smaller, having made the great sacrifice. He will withhold no needful help, now that the mighty design has been so seriously entered upon. Christ, too, was voluntary in the sacrifice, not compelled. He contemplated the burden he was about to assume. He would have turned the cup away, but not if he must drink it. "Let this cup pass," he said, when the agony, the mocking, the cruel injustice of Pilate's tribunal, the contradiction of sinners, the contempt of the people, the final pang were full and near before him. "If it be possible, let this cup pass," but not if it be thy will—not if the condition be imperative—not if the great plan will thus be frustrated; for, for this end came I into the world.

This is the grand central position of the Gospel—is the Gospel itself. He who believes in the crucified Savior believes the Gospel—hath eternal life. This is the true point of view whence it must be contemplated, or all is vain, the source of saving light—of all consolation to troubled hearts.

We stand by the cross of Christ and cry, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." This is our message, our argument, our doctrine, our warning to the impenitent, our encouragement for the sorrowing, the rich hope of the believer. When we can induce a man to fix his gaze upon the cross, our work is done. He is there taught of God. We step aside, and only beseech him to keep his gaze directed to the Lamb. There he will learn all. He will hate the sins that wounded his Lord. He will believe in all the word of God, which is so gloriously and wonderfully fulfilled. His doubts will vanish in the clear light of such a demonstration. No heart can withstand the affecting vision. The sinner sees Jesus as he is—all compassionate, amiable, divine. He will be speedily transformed by gazing upon the exhibition. Gratitude, heavenly love, blessed confidence steal into his soul, as it waits in rapt and adoring contemplation of him "who first loved us." None can bear away from such a presence a lingering doubt, "a troubled heart," an unbelieving fear. None but a stupid, hardened sinner can endure the sight unmoved; and even he—he has not seen Christ, his eyes are held, he is blind; yea, if our Gospel be hidden from him he is lost, and the god of this world has indeed blinded his eyes.

I linger here, because I feel that this view of Christ involves not only very important but all-essential truth—nothing more is wanting to the soul's comfort or salvation. I must yet speak briefly of other blessed adaptations of the Christian system.

I will refer to the kind and degree of evidence which attends and attests true interior religion—not historical and external evidence, which, however clear and valuable, presents a demand for erudition and study, and a large intellectual grasp, and is, so far, less adapted to the common mind; but internal, experimental evidence, which is liable neither to doubts nor cavilings. Nothing short of certainty can satisfy or ought to satisfy a soul whose eternity is the question in de-

bate. It is madness to be quiet and satisfied so long as we are in doubt whether we are the friends or the enemies of God. The soul can not, must not rest in suspense. The heart is troubled—tortured by suspense. Nice deductions, conclusions arrived at by ingenious concatenated trains of argument, may do in the forum or in a show of dialectics, but bring no comfort to a soul that has roused itself to the inquiry, Am I God's friend or foe? Now the great proofs on which the Gospel relies are demonstrations made to the moral perceptions of man, and are quite independent of logic and metaphysics. Even the preliminary evidences and influences of the Gospel are of this sort. The true light shines into all hearts directly from God. The Spirit operates divinely upon all, and all have a witness within that responds to the Gospel message. We rely exclusively on this voice of God within when we press religious truth on sinners. We know they believe, for God insures it.

Still less is the reality of reconciliation with God and justification by faith left to doubtful inferences. The Spirit of God bears witness within to the great moral revolution; and who could endure to rest in such a matter on lower testimony? who could cease from the troubles of his smitten heart? who could rejoice evermore? who could exult in Christ his Savior? who glory in heavenly prospects, so long as doubt hovered over his mind? It were absolute madness. The spirit of a man can not rest till the day-star arise in the heart—till Christ be formed within, the hope of glory—till the filial cry of Abba, Father, comes up spontaneously from the depths within. And this is just the evidence which the Gospel offers; and they who rest short of it enter but slightly into its true genius, and but poorly avail themselves of its provisions.

This evidence, so indispensable to our peace at the outset, is seconded, confirmed, and almost forgotten in the progress of experience, in that of love, which becomes the engrossing principle in a state of mature piety. The tendency of spirit-

ual life and gracious influence is to produce a oneness of purpose with Christ, a sympathy with his interests and glory, an intense affection for his character, attributes, and designs, which in some measure supersedes, or rather involves and absorbs faith, hope, and every other grace and virtue. The soul imbued with love to Christ is one with him in such a sense as to feel a spontaneous assurance of his favor. It thinks little of what proof may exist of a fact which is part and parcel of its existence, which has living demonstration in all its strong impulses and aspirations. Such a one communes with Christ. Christ is formed within him, lives in him, and he no longer asks, who shall ascend into heaven to bring Christ from above, or who shall descend into the deep, that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead? The confidence of loving and of being loved becomes entire, wanting nothing; and to be Christ's forever becomes more a reality already entered upon, than a question about which there are doubtful inquiries to be held.

It is quite in the spirit of my text to notice how much the incarnation of Christ and his participation of our nature tend to the production of this blessed confidence in him. We contemplate him as a man born of a woman, partaker of our weaknesses and wants. We look upon him as a son—a kinsman—a philanthropist. Our sympathies warm—our affections are elicited. We dare to love—we can love him. The distance and the dignity of the infinite are vailed, and we hail a brother, and receive a friend and a benefactor into our swelling hearts.

II.

THE CO-OPERATION OF DIVINE AND HUMAN AGENCY IN OUR SALVATION.

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.—PHIL., ii., 12, 13.

THIS passage of holy writ has been attended by fortunes somewhat remarkable. In the palmy days of the great controversy about liberty and power, which has enjoyed a vigorous life through almost the entire period of the Church's history, this has been a favorite proof-text with each of the opposing parties. Work out *your own* salvation, has been from age to age reiterated with a determined emphasis tantamount to a frank denial of all dependence on the power and grace of the Almighty. On the other hand, the complement of the text, "It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure," has long been held to be a very manifest and triumphant vindication of Antinomian repose, and fairly to set the sinner free from all obligation either to resolve or to endeavor, seeing that God does of himself both the willing and the doing. In these days of comparative exemption from polemical excitement, and of profounder submission to the divine oracles, intelligent Christians are not likely to find in this portion of holy Scripture such conflicting elements. All parties not blindly devoted to theory are able to recognize the presence of a fundamental Christian truth. It is a very precise announcement of the Christian doctrine, that the salvation of a soul and the whole business of religion require the concurrence of both human and divine forces; that man can not work out his own eternal well-being without heavenly aids, and that God will not do it for him without his own

strenuous and willing co-operation. Man is utterly dependent upon God for the efficiency and success of his religious efforts. God has been pleased to set forth all the methods and agencies of his recovering grace under such conditions as leave them ineffectual and unproductive without the sinner's consent and co-operation. It is a joint operation, involving grace and a concurring hearty obedience. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

I. This co-operation of divine and human energies has place in all the important facts and pursuits that make up the history of man.

1. It is true of the commencement of our being. God is our creator, and the giver of life to all; and yet our immediate progenitors, and the ancestors through whose veins our blood has flowed for so many generations, are, in a very important sense, the authors of our existence.

2. Our growth and education are the result of the same joint agency. God provides the germs of all that is possible to man—of bodily and mental growth—the organs of nutrition, strength, activity—the faculties of the mind which develop thought, invention, fancy, which are concerned in mental productions and achievements of all sorts. Of themselves, however, these only make wild savages and stupid boors. They require diligent culture by parent and teacher; they want reiterated lessons and exemplifications in knowledge, virtue, art, activity, suffering, in order to produce a *man*.

3. This fundamental law reigns over all the works of man. In tillage, where the earth's material substances, its sources of fertility and production, the germinating principle of all seeds, the successions of the seasons, and of day and night, of sunshine and clouds, of the former and latter rains are of God; while the plowing and the sowing, the culture and the harvesting, are human efforts without which all divine gifts are

in vain, and the earth will only cover itself with dark forests and unfruitful brambles.

4. In the elaborate productions of human skill and ingenuity we find a like illustration. In this church the material of every thing is God's work—the solidity, the ponderosity and strength of the earthy and mineral substances, the beautiful colors, the susceptibility of being wrought into tasteful, useful forms—the adaptation of the glass to exclude the wind and the storm, while it gives ingress to the light, are all properties with which God has endowed matter. But it is no less indubitably the energy of man that has lifted up these manifold deposits from the quarries and the mines, and gathered from the forest and from over the sea, and skillfully fashioned, and analyzed, and compounded, and reared up as we now see them, the various materials which constitute a temple for God's worship.

5. We see the same truth in what is perhaps the most wonderful product of human skill, the noble ship that traverses the sublime ocean, and defies its storms. What toil, what art were concerned in felling the unyielding oak and the stately pine, and bringing them from the forest, in imparting to them the proper shape, and securing the fit junctures, in rearing the masts, and binding the ribs, and molding the form, and stretching the cordage, and twisting the cable, and weighing the anchor! And yet how utterly worthless are these, and how unfit to secure their ends without the co-operation of higher agencies! Not only the properties of this vast assemblage of various materials, in virtue of which they are one and all adapted to their appointments; but the wind that fills the outspread sail, the powerful vapor that drives the leviathan machinery, the pliancy of the waves in yielding free passage to the floating ark, and the Vulcan strength with which it bears up the vast burden above the fathomless abyss below—all of these are gifts and co-operating forces which the great Architect of nature con-

tributes to this wonderful product of human ingenuity and labor.

II. It accords well, then, with the analyses and illustrations with which the history of the life of man is filled, that the working out of our salvation should involve a co-operation of divine and human energies. The necessity of such a concurrence is plainly involved in the idea of a gracious dispensation to moral agents, and it is very plainly set forth in our text.

What, then, let us reverently inquire, does God accomplish, and what does He demand of us in this joint performance?

1. God "works in us" by the light of His truth. The Scriptures refer to the works of God as they are manifested in the array of the universe as so many teachers, whose voices have gone forth throughout the whole earth, proclaiming the high attributes of Jehovah, and inculcating the great truths of natural religion; thus, even in the absence of more direct revelation, bringing all nations, the heathen themselves, under obligation to adore and obey the Author of so much magnificence and so much beneficence. But we are chiefly concerned with revealed truth and its operations upon the mind. It is of the very nature and essence of such truth that it shall gain our credence. The mind is so constituted as to be under the necessity of receiving the truth when it is fairly presented and understood. It can not but believe it. It can not, at its option, believe the opposing falsehood. It can not take darkness for light. It can not believe that the whole is less than a part. It can not believe that wrong is as good as right—that we do not owe obedience and love to our Creator and Benefactor. However the verities of religion are presented, if accompanied by fit proof, they are, and must needs be, believed spontaneously. It happens, therefore, unavoidably, that when the truths of religion are presented to men, in the

Bible, by parental teaching, by the pulpit, by the Christian life around us, or by the contagion of sympathy, they are received and embraced, and, whether acted upon or not, they are thenceforth part and parcel of the mind's stable convictions, destined to modify its opinions, and to produce at least some indirect and involuntary influence upon the life. We are wont to speak of unconverted men as living with no reference to religion; but I think it is true of all, with perhaps the exception of the most besotted and profligate, that God's truth has an important relation to their daily life, as well as deeply interesting relations to their moral condition and prospects.

2. God works in us by the power of motives. He has endowed us richly by the knowledge and belief of the truth, and He has made it our highest interest to obey it. Men are so constituted as to be influenced, and, when moral depravity does not interfere with reasonable action, to be controlled by motives.

The hopes and fears connected with the soul's destinies through an eternal future are to be recognized as motives directed by divine wisdom to this beneficial end. So are the pleasures and enjoyments of life, which awaken in well-ordered minds a grateful sense of obligation to the great Benefactor. So are afflictions and disappointments, which dim the delusive brightness of earthly prospects, and compel us to look beyond the grave for the satisfaction of our highest wants. So is the dread of death, which is terrible as the dissolution of the body, but which derives its terrors chiefly from the gloomy anticipations with which it forces us into reluctant communion. So is the desire of everlasting happiness implanted in us as a moral instinct, ever active and powerful. So is the voice of Conscience, ever ready with its lessons of warning and approbation. These are all so many methods by which God operates upon the will of man and urges him to piety, by which He worketh in us to

will and to do of His good pleasure. These are motive forces, of which He has made a permanent lodgment within us, which ply the will with sleepless solicitations, of which the soul is perpetually conscious, and in communion with which man must, from the imperative conditions of his being, pass his probation.

Every day, hour, moment comes freighted with a terrible significance, in the fact that we are constantly fitting ourselves for weal or woe that is endless, as well as infinitely intense. This is not a fitful, transient impression, but one of the inevitable, undying facts, under the consciousness and pressure of which men go on and work out their destiny, with a divinely implanted assurance that the question of life and death, of heaven or hell, is thus working out its own solution. We ought to remember, in order to reach a proper estimate of the amazing energy which God expends upon man in this reclaiming agency, that no motives stronger or more powerful can even be imagined. It is inconceivable that God should be able to ply us with stronger motives.

The evils with which our impenitence and inaction are threatened are very great and intense. They are, when once incurred, wholly without a remedy or mitigation, and endless in duration. The rewards, also, by which we are incited to a prompt and right choice are such as the soul of man most needs and most yearns after—exemption from pain, together with the highest enjoyment of which the soul is, or can be capable—growth in knowledge and in moral excellency, angelic and even divine society, all things progressive, and growing more and more excellent and exalted through eternity. Even the terrible punishments of the wicked in this view, and considered as motives and as constituting one of God's methods of working in us to will and to do, are to be regarded as mercies. If such motives often fail of producing the desired effect, we could not afford to have them made weaker.

3. God works in us by the energy of his Spirit. The Holy Ghost, in the exercise of his chosen functions, shines upon the conscience, rouses its energies, and makes it a witness and even an advocate for God. The sinner is, therefore, ever self-condemned. He feels guilty before God. Now there can not be a more deplorable and deeply affecting condition than this, in which the working of God has inextricably *fixed* the impenitent. The heart of man never quite faints within him till this terrible consciousness of *being guilty*—of *deserving* punishment, settles within it. This consciousness is to a generous nature worse than the fear or pain of death—that of feeling that a merciful and holy God *must* and *ought* to be dissatisfied with him. This, too, is one of God's *permanent* ways of working in us. Here, too, is a worm that dieth not.

The Holy Spirit works in us, by bringing to mind vividly and often the religious truths and motives so much relied on in God's saving operations. We naturally seek to forget the truths and the motives which we refuse to obey, and they would soon become a dead letter but for the vivifying agency of the Spirit. He taketh the things of God, and presents them anew to the mind. He makes the neglected word quick and powerful. He comes ever and anon to dispel our delusions and cast away our dreams. We persuade ourselves that the world is a good portion, and that it is well and wise to seek riches, and honor, and luxury. This revelation of the corrupt heart triumphs over Heaven's truth sometimes, and we suit the action to the theory. Blinded by the god of this world, we should henceforth read no other oracles but his, but for the reviving visitations of the Spirit, which comes to expose the cheat and reopen our eyes. Then the stones cry out against us, and we see a handwriting upon the wall: Curses stand inscribed upon our pleasant palaces, and "*lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God*," over the portals of our gay saloons and luxurious chambers. We are led to

feel again that all is verily vexation of spirit, that the true interests of our being have been sacrificed, that the old, inappeasable, restless demand for a new heart and a new life is yet good against us.

In these visitations of the Spirit there is, I think, a divine demonstration to all considerate persons. Reason can not account for these alternations of feelings and thoughts. With no change of knowledge or arguments, men experience the greatest fluctuations of sentiment. To-day the world is every thing—to-morrow, or the next moment, we see its emptiness, and feel that *eternity* is the only important thing. We have no such sudden mutations of sentiment in regard to other things—to business, politics, economy. It is the Spirit showing to the soul glimpses of the things of God.

At times these spiritual impressions become more stable, and extend to many individuals, sometimes to a congregation or a community. They rest as "cloven tongues of fire" upon the Church, and all its true members receive an unction from on high. A divine presence is almost felt to hover upon the people, and the sympathies and sentiments of the multitude become instinct with earnestness, and power, and pathos. The pastor's appeal, the father's counsels, and the mother's entreaty, find listening ears and susceptible hearts. Men find themselves rescued from their habitual insensibility, and raised into a new region, where motion and moral efforts and changes become easy. This is the Spirit's highest manifestation to the unconverted, and thus he puts forth his highest energies in "working in us."

III. What is now the intent and object of all these divine operations, whether of the light of truth, or the power of motive, or the Spirit's energy "working in us?"

1. They are not designed to transform the character, as when after conversion they are media of sanctification. Indeed, men often grow worse, and never really better, under these influences. These agencies are not efficient as ends,

but only as means. Their work is done in order to induce men to enter upon the incipient religious movement which begins the Christian life—to lead men "to will and to do," *to resolve and to act*. To this one end all these divine efforts are directed. They have no commission to perform for us either the willing or the doing. These are our own proper work, in which, so soon as we are willing to enter upon it, God's grace stands ready to be our auxiliary, but can not be our substitute. Hence it follows that no degrees of light, conviction, and grace can convert the soul, only as they may rouse us to co-operation. We have seen that men may be, and usually are, *perfectly convinced*, and that the motives which urge them to religion are *infinitely* strong, and that the Spirit puts forth energies so divine as to break the spell of the world, and overawe the multitude, without effecting any favorable change in the sinner. If it were possible to increase the power and intensity of these influences a hundredfold, the result would be no better. The intellect might reel, and the heart break under the intolerable pressure, but the strong-hold against which all this urgent aggression is directed would remain impregnable. A thousand times more of conviction than ever a mortal felt, would be insufficient to convert a soul. A thousand times less than multitudes feel from day to day, might be adequate to all the ends of saving piety.

2. A point is now reached in which human co-operation is the indispensable condition of progress. "Work out your own salvation," is the practical lesson inculcated by all God's working within.

The hardest of the soul's struggles belongs to the hour of its great resolve—when it renounces the world, tramples upon the lusts of the flesh and the pride of life, and consciously chooses Christ for its portion. Such a purpose, deliberately conceived in the depths of a thoughtful, anxious mind, implies the commencement of a great moral revolution, and may

well be regarded, in reliance upon the gracious influences which will ever gather about an act of religious consecration, as a fair initiation into the Christian life. It is the precise step urged upon us by Him who "worketh in us to will and to do," and its real value and importance can only be determined by its permanent influence upon the character and the life. *Do* what is so inculcated. Follow the leading of the Spirit. Obey the impulse given by high heaven. God, in all his operations, seeks this one thing—to induce you "to will and to do." Your whole duty in the premises consists simply in obedience in willing and doing. In obtaining your consent to become a Christian, all this apparatus of means—these convictions, visitations of the Spirit which have covered your moral history hitherto, find their satisfaction. It is the full import of their preparatory dispensation. This full surrender, this high resolve removes the one obstacle to piety—sweeps away the massive barrier that alone has so long bid defiance to the approaches of Heaven's saving grace.

3. WILL AND DO. These are the significant words which describe the duty of the unconverted man. Seem they mysterious, cabalistic terms, hard to be understood and obeyed? None in the Bible are really plainer or more simply practical. What is implied in this *willing*—this pregnant resolve, on which so vast results are suspended? It may be you have been an undutiful son, and are about to reform. You begin, of course, by a volition, and *resolve* hereafter to be dutiful. What is contained in such a purpose? That you will perform all your neglected duties, will honor and cherish your parents, consult their will and their taste, and do all you can to promote their welfare and honor. And all this you set about doing cordially and frankly, and continue to do so. Your resolve has not bound you to do or omit any particular thing so much as with true, upright intention to carry out in action, and on all occasions, the new principle which you have ad-

mitted to control you. The religious process is as simple and as practicable. The hearty adoption of the new principle of action toward God, and the honest, earnest application of it to the life—this is precisely the willing and the doing which, with such infinite, sedulous painstaking, God "worketh in us" to accomplish.

In conclusion, I remark,

1. It is of the utmost importance practically to observe *the order* of the proposed method. *The will must precede the work.* Nothing is more common, especially in a time of general seriousness, than to transpose these terms. Awakened persons, without having made the full, irrevocable resolve to live for God, often enter, with apparent earnestness, upon the work of what they deem seeking religion. And so they pass on through anxious days and months, as sad, as earnest, as prayerful as any, all the while having their hearts closed against the divine renovation they so urgently invoke. They have omitted and refused to do the first work. They pray, and weep, and strive, as a tentative process—a sort of experiment in religion—hopeful, it would seem, that somehow, amid these efforts and this bodily and mental exercise, some good may befall, and some by-door into the kingdom spring open before them. Such a career of blind, vain, objectless seeking, as it is called, ends in a return to levity and the world, or in a stubborn melancholy—the heart hardened, seared, poisoned with a self-righteous consciousness of having tried the experiment and failed—throwing the blame boldly upon God. These builders forgot to lay the foundation. They omitted the first and the main step in the process. It may be they were glad to evade the main issue, which involves the main sacrifice. They were willing *to do*, but not to *will*, to resolve, to submit absolutely and irrevocably. Their working and seeking have, so far, been but an expedient to pacify the startled conscience, which must fulfill one of the conditions proposed, and finds it easier to work than to

submit and resolve. Such persons, if they ever discover their mistake, will have to retrace their steps back to their point of departure, and begin with the heart rather than the hands. They must recognize the great obstacle to piety where God has pointed it out. So, beginning at the source and fountain of all right moral movements, by the homage of the free will, they will find that, instead of having to go far to seek religion, religion will eagerly seek them, and bear them away to the great feast.

2. Let us remark, again, that a successful commencement in religion does not depend wholly, or in part, upon deep, pungent convictions, nor profound sorrow, nor plenteous tears. All the agitations that precede conversion are without effect upon the result sought, except in so far as they may incline the inquirer to accept the proffered method of relief, or rouse him to the importance of religion and the vastness of the interests at stake. If we could induce him, in his calmer moods, to contemplate the subject, and deliberately choose the better, *resolve* determinately and at once to give his life to God's service, I doubt not the work of conversion would be quite as effectually done. In either case, and in all cases, the one issue pressed upon the sinner is absolute submission both in purpose and life.

3. These conditions complied with, the man is, for the first time, in a position to exercise the faith about which he has been so long puzzled. It is not the business of this crisis to study and embrace great doctrines and compare creeds. The mind has long since probably been well furnished in this respect, or it may well postpone such studies to fitter opportunities. The faith it needs and seeks is a full trust in Christ as its Savior. And now, having voluntarily accepted Christ to be lawgiver and ruler, and so being placed in a position to be saved, not only is it easy to believe in him, but it is hardly possible to withhold unreserved confidence in him as *our* Savior. We did not, and we could not, trust him before, just be-

cause we were conscious of holding a rebel's position. Now we have submitted, and can claim the promises; or, rather, grace flows in spontaneously now the obstacle is out of the way.

4. We may now hopefully point the willing soul to the love of God. He now desires Christ upon his own terms. He called on him perhaps before, but not like an honest penitent. It was, in reality, an indignity to call upon the Crucified, spurning meantime the terms on which he offers himself to the world. Now we may press up to the mercy-seat, and claim all things in the name of our Savior and our Priest.

I have little to say of the fear and the trembling of our text. I suppose this language refers to the very serious conditions and liabilities under which we work out our salvation. We may die at any time, and so go into eternity without religion. We are guilty of fearful sin every hour that we resist God's method of recovering grace, and thus heap up wrath against the day of wrath. We grieve the Spirit by delay, and so may finally expel him. We grow older, and with increasing years come diminished religious susceptibilities. There is every day less probability that a man will become a Christian. Every day increases the fearful probability that he will not be converted—that he will lose his soul. The impenitent, under all the urgencies of strong conviction, under the intolerable pressure and burden of overwhelming motive, obstinately maintains his position, and will not resolve. He does not become a Christian, and can not, just because he will not take the first step, and so he stands a monument of folly and guilt, a spectacle to men and angels.

III.

LIFE INEXPLICABLE EXCEPT AS A PROBATION.

A Discourse delivered in the Methodist Episcopal Church, Rhinebeck, N. Y., July 15, 1849, at the Funeral of Mrs. Catharine Garrettson.

An enlightened Christian can hardly avoid feeling some measure of wonder as well as of disapprobation at the view of human life which finds expression in the remarkable reply of the patriarch Jacob to the question of Pharaoh, "How old art thou?" "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years. Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been," was the answer of an old man and prophet, whose earthly pilgrimage had already been protracted more than a full half century beyond the usual limits of the good old age conceded to his successors. Not only had his life been long, but eminently prosperous. He had, indeed, been no stranger to labors, perils, adversity; but these vicissitudes were the good discipline which had molded his great character, and made him a great man. It would be difficult to mention a single element of good fortune which Divine Providence had withholden from this its favored child. He had derived a vigorous physical constitution and a glorious intellect from ancestors who made treaties with sovereign states and gained victories over kings, and who could trace back their pedigree, honored from age to age by special tokens of divine favor, to the common parents of our human race in the Garden of Eden. He had gained an ample fortune by the manly exercise of his own talents—a species of success which is usually thought to contribute beyond any other method of acquisition to human happiness—and he had inherit-

ed from Isaac and Abraham, and perhaps more distant and equally reputable progenitors, a princely patrimony—a source of wealth most favorable to personal dignity and most gratifying to family pride. He was the father of a numerous family of sons, all alive, and men of renown, already patriarchs, and the appointed heads and progenitors of the tribes of Israel. To crown all, now in his old age, his favorite son, whom he had long mourned as the victim of a frightful casualty, had just called him and his multitudinous household from a famine-stricken land, to make them sharers of his own honor and affluence, as the prime minister of a great king, and the actual ruler of the most wealthy and civilized nation on earth. It was of such a career that the venerable patriarch declared, "The days of the years of my pilgrimage have been few and evil." I think we should rather have expected there, in the presence of a heathen king, some humble acknowledgment of gratitude, some lofty ascription of praise for so much of Heaven's munificence, and for a life so full of days and of blessings. We find ourselves compelled to remember that Jacob lived under a lower dispensation than ours.

Any intelligent Christian would have given a wiser and more pious answer; but "the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he, than whom a greater had not risen among them that were born of women." It is a common error to think too highly of the light enjoyed under the dim revelation that preceded the Gospel, in comparison with the glorious manifestation under which it is our privilege to work out our salvation. We are thus led to expect too much of pious men under the old dispensation, and, taking them for our standard, to demand too little of ourselves.

For aught that appears to the contrary in the Bible, Jacob's answer to the King of Egypt was only such as a heathen or a mere worldling might have made. He gave expression to the sentiment of dissatisfaction and regret with which an old man is wont to look back upon the history of even an

eventful and prosperous life. His rapid advancement to wealth and distinction, the uniform success of his far-reaching schemes, his thrifty management in his business transactions with Esau and Laban, and the signal triumph of his policy and his arms, contemplated from his actual position, were no longer able to awaken agreeable reminiscences. He thought rather of the trials of his early days; of his long, well-merited self-banishment from the home of his childhood; of his solitary journey to the "land of the people of the East;" of his hard bondage in the service of Laban, when "the drought consumed him by day and the frost by night, and sleep departed from his eyes;" of his long, deep, inconsolable mourning for Rachel, and Joseph, and Benjamin. Dark clouds had settled upon the landscape, now left far behind. The bright lights that illuminated the sky of his youth were dimmed or extinguished in the distance. The sweet flowers that beautified and perfumed the plains of Mesopotamia and the hills and valleys of Palestine had faded from his darkened vision. Such were the sad reminiscences and cheerless scenes amid which the aged patriarch retraced in retrospect the track of his long life, when he pronounced "the days of its years few and evil." If his estimate of life was exaggerated, it was yet not unnatural. It was eminently *human* in the same breath to denounce life as *evil*, and yet to regret its brevity.

With only the imperfect light of nature for our guide, aided by all the revelations that preceded Him "who brought life and immortality to light," we should be compelled, I think, to admit this humbling, despairing view of life and our earthly condition to be essentially just. I am wholly unable to conceive how a mere philosopher, or any one who does not employ for the solution of this question the great argument of the Gospel, can relieve the subject of its melancholy aspects, or refuse to concur in the verdict which pronounces life essentially *evil*.

Let us interrogate the wisdom of the world on this momentous subject, and hear what responses it is able to give to mitigate our distaste and pacify our doubts and fears. How does it account for the manifold ills which flesh is heir to, even under the most favorable conditions of existence in this world? What consolation can it offer? What explanation can it give of the inexorable law which consigns us all to early death, heedless of our mortal reluctance, and as if in bitter mockery of the instinctive love of life which the great Lawgiver has himself planted deep in our nature? The case of an old man, who, like Jacob, has filled up a long life with usefulness and prosperity, is precisely that involved in the least difficulty; and yet I do not see how, independently of the teachings of the Gospel, we are to dispose of the doubts which even here crowd upon the mind. But how, on ordinary principles, shall we reconcile with the Divine mercy and justice the removal from their sphere of usefulness of men in the vigor of life—the fathers of helpless and dependent families—the patrons and instruments of those beneficent and ameliorating enterprises to which human society is accustomed to look for its well-being and its advancement in knowledge and virtue, no less than in material prosperity? In the very strength and force of their manhood, in the very maturity and efficiency of their mental powers, at the acme of reputation and influence, do we see these pillars of the social fabric violently wrenched from their position, with a reckless disregard of human happiness not easily reconcilable with faith in an overruling Providence, but painfully suggestive rather of the reign, not of blind, but of malignant chance in human affairs.

Still more profound is the mystery that hangs over the dissolution of infancy and childhood, before one of the appreciable ends of life has been attained. Is it in mere wantonness, or for pastime and an ostentatious display of her productive energies, that nature so heedlessly and so wastefully

blasts in the bud, or in their first flower, a portion of the human family so truly prodigious? I know not what satisfactory answer a disbeliever in the Gospel can give to these, and a multitude of similar questions which the phenomena of daily life are ever forcing upon his attention. All the anti-Christian theories of human life are reducible to two—individual happiness, and the perfection of the race. The first announces the "chief end of man" to be, the promotion of his own happiness; the acquisition of knowledge, wealth, influence, and the enjoyment, perhaps the diffusion of them.

Of which of these pursuits and attainments are not death and its antecedents fatally obstructive? By the unchangeable laws of our being, youth and manhood must be spent in acquisition. The succeeding period, which the theory in question must regard the *natural* season of repose and fruition, is usually oppressed with infirmities which impair the powers of enjoyment, and render comparatively worthless resources accumulated with so much anxious toil, while the great destroyer soon arrives to dispel the poor illusions which the wisdom of the world has pronounced the "great end" of our being.

If old and middle age, unblessed by Christian hopes, has so much reason to be dissatisfied with the concomitants and results of even a prosperous life, what shall we say of those who die in infancy, childhood, and youth? of those who only live long enough to toil and suffer in quest of the appointed good, but not to obtain or enjoy it? Who shall say that they have not utterly failed of securing life's great object; and that life, with all its apparatus of faculties and means, and hopes and toils, has not been, to these victims of its injustice, discomfiture and cruel mockery? What anomalies and impertinences are these abortions of hope and toilsome endeavor, in a theory of life which has no future in which to solve its enigmas, adjust its contradictions, and compensate its sufferers!

But the wisdom of this world has another theory of life more comprehensive and specious, but beset with similar, and even greater difficulties. Nature, it teaches us, is little solicitous for the individual man, but provides bountifully for the race, of which all her laws and arrangements are designed to promote the well-being and the perfection. The individual man, indeed, suffers and dies; but man social, the body politic, the species, lives and is immortal. The aspirations of the human heart are to find their satisfaction in a participation of the aggregate happiness, and must learn stoicism or resignation in regard to the sorrows and sufferings of the units of which the great community is composed. This view of life forgets that cold, hunger, sickness, disappointment, destitution, oppression, befall men as individuals, not as a race, and that human society is only happy or the reverse, in the sensitive, intelligent individuals who compose it. But, waiving this fundamental difficulty, how does the theory in question serve to explain the dark phenomena of which we are in quest of the solution? How does the suffering of which the world is full—how does the death of infants, and children, and young men, contribute to the felicity or perfection of the human species, or of a community?

Upon this hypothesis, too, the *shortness of life* is inexplicable. The progress of society is chiefly retarded by the want of truly great men, fit to be leaders in its enterprises—of truly wise and good men, fit to be public teachers; to be the models and censors of public morals, leaders in great enterprises. Such men are proverbially rare. They rise scarcely two or three in a century; and while their advent is ever regarded as the harbinger of a golden age to the countries that may be honored by their birth, their early removal clothes nations in sackcloth. If, instead of being subjected to the common lot of mortals, these heaven-sent sages might be allowed the years of our antediluvian progenitors, what infinite benefits would they confer upon the world! Under

their enlightened policy and stable administration, the largest and most thorough systems of improvement and amelioration would be carried to their great results. Under the present economy of human life, the most hopeful undertakings are blasted by change and revolution. The wisest and best rulers are, after a few years, succeeded by the weakest and the worst. Some proud and cruel Tarquin is ever at hand to subvert the handywork of an upright, paternal Numa; some bloody, savage Manasseh to spread desolation over the land, purged and blessed by the piety of Josiah. Without multiplying proofs and illustrations, it will be sufficiently apparent that the uncertainty and brevity of human life constitute the most common as well as the most powerful obstacle in the way of individual and national improvement and well-being. If these are, indeed, the great ends of our existence, then must it be confessed that they have hitherto been completely thwarted. No failure was ever more complete and universal. The anomalous influences have proved stronger than the system, and death, the destroyer, an overmatch for the creator and upholder of the doomed race.

Our difficulties remain in their full force. Why is life so short? Why do the old die? Why are the young cut down in the midst of their preparation for life? Why are infancy and childhood blighted in the very dawn of their being, in their weakness, and in their innocency? We have seen that the wisdom of the world has no reply. This tremendous question has baffled all its sages. Let us turn with our inquiries to the Gospel of Jesus. Other theories of life are silent and confounded. Let us now interrogate the Christian theory. We will, for this time, refrain from making our appeal to the letter and dogmatic announcements of the Gospel, but rather seek the teachings of its comprehensive, underlying philosophy. We ask, what is the chief end of man? Why does he live, and why does he die? and we have the reply in the language of an old catechism, "to

glorify God and enjoy him forever." What is the true theory of life, with all its trials, sufferings, and catastrophes? It is a state of probation; it is the first stage of endless being, the ante-chamber of eternity, where we stay a while for instruction, and discipline, and purification, preparatory to the higher pursuits and enjoyments to which, if found worthy, we are shortly to be promoted. Let us apply these axioms of the true philosophy, which are no other than the first principles of religion, to the solution of the difficulties which have baffled all other hypotheses.

Life is a probation for eternity, to which its brevity and uncertainty constitute important means and conditions of success.

Threescore years and ten constitute a period long enough for the purposes of religion. We know, as an historical fact, that the foundations of piety are almost always laid in early life, and that few are converted after sixty or seventy years of age. There is a physical reason for this, deeply implanted in the human constitution, not to speculate upon the moral reasons which the All-wise may have chosen to hide in his own bosom. In most instances the capacity to receive new impressions, and to enter successfully on new courses of thought or action, is completely exhausted before the age of threescore years and ten. For all practical purposes, the probation of an impenitent sinner has usually closed before extreme age robs his limbs and his intellect of their vigor. If, under these circumstances, his life were to be prolonged to the age of Methuselah, it would be utterly valueless in reference to the great end for which we live. It would be intrinsically worthless, and something worse, except as the postponement of the unutterable evils that follow an unfruitful probation. Could we see as God sees, we might now read, in the unwritten epitaph of many a hoary sinner, "Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone." To such a one, who in reality has already decided irrevocably his own destiny, of what use

is longer life? He has shamefully failed of securing life's only worthy object. The tide in his affairs which should have borne him on to celestial fortunes has passed forever. He is, to all practical purposes, a doomed spirit. More days he may see, but not better. He has a brief respite of merited, certain punishment, but pardon is no longer possible. Were it not as well for the sinner, when once the great question is settled against his soul, to be sent away at once to his place? What does he here in this world of probation any longer, but "fill up the measure of his iniquities, and heap up wrath against the day of wrath?" No; life is not too short. Death does not usually come too soon for those who have already sinned through threescore years. It were perhaps wise, in the long run, for such to choose the refuge of such an eternity as they are to have, in preference to a longer continuance in sin, in the circumstances of special aggravation under which sin is committed by them in this redeemed, enlightened probationary world.

I hardly need add, that life is long enough for those who have wisely used it in finding reconciliation with God, through the infinite sacrifice made upon the cross. We wrong ourselves, and the gracious economy under which we are called to work out our salvation, when we dread death as an evil. Our natural enemy he is, but conquered and captive since the day when Christ triumphed over the grave, and dragged the destroyer in the train of his glorious triumph. The Christian's dread of death is most unreasonable. It is ever condemned in anticipation by his own faith, and usually forgotten or contemned in the hour of its coming. It is then found to be but a bad habit of the imagination or the nerves, contracted in the days of feeble faith and dim spiritual vision. We are content to endure slight temporary inconveniences, that we may secure great and durable benefits. We make toilsome journeys to visit beloved relatives or friends. We gladly cross stormy seas, that we may see magnificent or

historical structures, or renowned cities, or beautiful landscapes, or celebrated statues and paintings. Often shorter and easier is the passage to heaven, "the city that hath foundations," where Jesus, in his glory, sits at the right hand of God, where is an innumerable company which no man can number, all having "washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb;" and where we ourselves, made pure and immortal, with palms in our hands and crowns on our heads, shall mingle our voices in their ceaseless chorus. Who would choose to spend a thousand years on earth, with wicked men, rather than in heaven in the society of God and his angels, and his glorified saints?

I only add that, as an existence on the earth protracted beyond the common age of man would be useless to the sinner, and the very reverse of a boon to the pious, so, in the actual moral condition of men, it could not fail of proving a grievous curse to human society. Think of a Voltaire, with five hundred or a thousand years to sow the seeds of corruption, and mature their harvests; and imagine the state of public morals at the end of such a millennium. Call to mind the ravages of some ancient or modern conqueror, and then allow him the years of an antediluvian patriarch to extend his conquests and consolidate his empire. The solar system could not afford him worlds enough to conquer, nor a hundred generations of men blood enough to shed. To reduce our illustration to a smaller scale, with the addition of one or two hundred years to the ordinary term of human life, and a guarantee of unimpaired faculties for calculation and management, there are, in each of our great commercial emporia, single capitalists who would be able, within the period supposed, to engross fortunes equal to the entire wealth of the cities, or even states, in which they reside. Every shrewd usurer would, in his sphere, become a Rothschild, with no limit to his means of aggrandizement and oppression but the absolute exhaustion of his victims. Inevitably the

world would be again as it was before the flood, when "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart."

The arguments adduced will, I am sure, be thought sufficient to justify the shortness of human life—to vindicate the wisdom which has "made our days as an handbreadth." We must pursue another line of thought, in order to clear away the darkness that hangs over many particular instances of mortality. Death invades the circle of the intelligent, the virtuous, the young, when, on all human considerations, it seems most desirable, most proper, that they should continue to live. Aspiring, gifted, fresh for the race, consecrated, it may be, to the highest interests of religion and humanity, they are suddenly removed from the sphere in which they have as yet acted no important part, but were just prepared to engage in a career of eminent usefulness. How shall we dissipate the darkness that hangs over such dispensations? Our first duty is submission to the sovereign Disposer of events. "It is the Lord. Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." In this frame of faith and resignation we may, without presumption, appeal to any method of solution to clear away difficulties and justify the ways of God to man, not in conflict with the principles and teachings of the Gospel.

We must revert again to the fundamental idea of our Christian system, that life is a state of probation, divinely adapted in its permanent conditions to originate and nurture piety in men. To this one end the dispensations of Heaven, and the circumstances of human existence are accommodated, not always so to our imperfect apprehension, but always and infallibly so in God's designs. Now among the providential means for bringing men to a sense of religious things, *death, with its sequences*, is unquestionably the most powerful. Skeptics, who doubt every religious truth, and say in their

heart "there is no God," are firm believers in death. Oppressors and profligates, "who fear not God nor regard man," both fear and tremble before the "king of terrors." That deadliest foe to piety—the love of the world, and the love of pleasure—relaxes its iron grasp in the presence, and often at thoughts of death. Men are, and were designed to be, "all their lifetime in bondage" to the fear of death, until they find deliverance by submission to Him who obtained for us the victory.

This one omnipresent, mighty idea, which no sophistry can obscure, and no audacity disarm, is all abroad among the habitations of men, denouncing the world as a vain illusion, and pleading for the rights and interests of eternity. Of all preachers of righteousness, of all precursors of the Gospel, the fear of death is the most effectual. I doubt not it has its agency in every conversion of a soul, and it may be doubted if, in the absence of these sermons from the grave, "these terrors of the Lord," other agencies of sufficient potency would remain to awaken impenitent sinners, and lead them to feel their urgent need of a Savior. Now it is obvious that whatever power over the human heart belongs to this great argument, it is derived not less from the *uncertainty* of the time of our dissolution, than from the certainty of its ultimate coming. This is precisely the argument used by our Savior: "Ye know not the day nor the hour when the Son of Man cometh. Watch, therefore, that when he comes ye may be found ready." Let us suppose that instead of the present irregular, sudden, apparently fortuitous visitations of death, some limits were settled from which the destroyer should be excluded; that neither children nor youth, nor the middle-aged, should die, but only the sated guest who had sat undisturbed at the feast of life his threescore years and ten. We can not for a moment doubt the terrible effects of such a change. Sinners, who, under the present dispensation, with the fearful presages of death forever haunting their

guilty souls, are with such infinite difficulty, and such fearful infrequency, persuaded to repent, would infallibly postpone religion till the pressing hour of imminent need should come; that is, to a time when wicked habits have become strong, the conscience seared, the susceptibilities blunted, and all changes, but from bad to worse, nearly impossible. Who does not perceive, in this view of the subject, that it is an infinite mercy to us that God arms the destroyer with so many and so great terrors? He will not leave us to sleep on quite to the brink of hell. There is a voice "that cries, prepare ye the way of the Lord," coming up from every age, and every circle, and every habitation. Are the friends so unceremoniously and so unseasonably snatched away, young, lovely, pious, full of talent and of promise? Let us not misinterpret the omen. We needed, it seems, a stern rebuke; we required a loud call. The victims were indeed costly, but the warning is so much the more impressive. Alas! there are half earnest Christians, who need just such a call to put on their armor and gird them for the battle. There are ever backsliders, who will perhaps give heed to lessons spoken from the place of judgment, though they refuse all gentler rebukes. There are impenitent sinners who will perhaps listen reverently to this most audible appeal from the grave, though they have so long refused to hear Moses and the prophets.

In order to comprehend this argument in all its grasp and force, we have need to observe, that precisely those instances of mortality which most shock our sensibilities as violent and untimely, are most adapted to produce these great moral results, contemplated, as we must presume, by the Almighty disposer of life and of death. The dissolution of the aged comes to be regarded as a thing of necessity, a matter of course, which hardly awakens more surprise or emotion than the observed fulfillment of nature's other laws. It seems needful, therefore, to a realization of the moral purposes in-

trusted to the close of human life, that tribute to the grave should be exacted from every age and condition; from the ranks of business and ambition, to break, if possible, the omnipotent spell by which the world enthralls its bondmen; from the circles of youth and gayety, to second and enforce the lessons which Religion is now, in her chosen time, struggling to impress upon susceptible though wayward hearts; from guileless infancy, we may believe, to rescue these "children of the kingdom" from evil to come; we are quite sure with purposes of divine mercy toward parents, brothers, sisters, friends, whose unsatisfactory religious state imperatively demands such an appeal. With regard to those who are thus early removed, even before their probation has commenced, we can not doubt that they find the most glorious compensations for all they have been called from here. Heaven will no doubt afford the noblest field for growth, and for the cultivation of the virtues and graces wanted for their high career; nor is it given to us, in our lowly sphere, even to conjecture the heights of moral and intellectual excellence to be attained by those who are transferred to celestial regions in the first dawn of their being, and form their character in the presence of angels and of the spirits of just men made perfect, and in communing with Him on whom to look without a vail is to be "transformed into his image."

We must pass the other ground of dissatisfaction with life with only a brief notice. The patriarch's days were "evil," as well as "few." Keeping in view the Christian theory, that life is a *probation*, we satisfy this objection to the divine administration in a single utterance. "Evil" as it is, the pleasures and seductions of life constitute the chief hinderances to piety. If this world were more attractive, men would love it the more. Success intoxicates, riches and power corrupt, the soul. "Thou hast goods laid up for many years, eat, drink," is the language of a man prosperous and at ease in his possessions. Life is "evil," and yet the vast majority

of those who make this complaint choose it, with all its drawbacks, in preference to Christ and heaven. Endowed with additional fascinations, who would resist its seductive influence?

Could we see as God sees, we should perceive the good and "evil" of life wisely proportioned and adjusted for the promotion of life's great end—the cultivation of piety. Enough of enjoyment there is to awaken gratitude in well-disposed minds, and to demonstrate the divine benevolence. Enough of trials and sufferings there are for the purposes of moral discipline; of satisfactions, to gild the house of our pilgrimage, and to cultivate in pure minds a taste for the unalloyed fruitions of heaven. We should esteem life's intermingled sorrows and joys as wisely *planned* to multiply conjunctures for the production and the cultivation of Christian virtues. So "death and all our woe" were admitted into the world along with the earliest promise of a Savior. The consequences and the penalty of transgression, they were wisely and mercifully subjected to such laws as favor the sinner's restoration. This is the plain teaching of the Holy Scriptures, and no other theory leaves any solid ground either for faith or hope. All others must precipitate us upon sheer atheism.

In this view, every instance of Christian piety may be received as a demonstration of the Divine wisdom and goodness that preside over the adjustments and providential allotments of our probationary state. The conversion and sanctification of a fallen, depraved intelligence is a work so high and difficult, and so contrary to nature, that every example of its successful achievement illustrates the excellency of the method; and the "days of the years" of that life which secures the only worthy end of life can not be pronounced "evil," however numerically insignificant, or however darkened by untoward events.

"Long life," "length of days," "fullness of years," "good old age," are among the rewards of virtuous life; and when

consecrated to God's service, they often become distinguished blessings to the favored individual and to society; while the sinner, being a hundred years old, shall be accursed.

Let us now seek the fit improvement of this subject, and illustration and support for the principles and arguments set forth in this discourse, in the special, solemn occasion which has called together this great multitude to pay their tribute of respect and affection to the venerable friend whom it has pleased God to remove from our society, and exalt into his own more immediate, glorious presence. After a life of more than ninety-six years, devoted in an eminent degree to the glory of the Savior, and to the temporal and spiritual welfare of her fellow-creatures, she has now entered upon her great reward, leaving to us, her friends, her brethren, her kinsmen, for our edification and comfort, an example of Christian piety as pure, beautiful, and attractive, I think, as the Church militant in these latter days is wont to exhibit. In the contemplation of such a career, all beautified with holiness, and "shining more and more unto the perfect day," it does not occur to us to think of either the brevity or the trials of life as "evils;" we rather adore the infinite wisdom and grace which has overruled its vicissitudes and events to the production of such a character. Christian piety, early, deep, symmetrical, and graceful, effective in life, and triumphant in the hour of death, clearly demonstrates how wisely God has established the conditions and appointed the means under which it has found its developments. Such a marked example of holy living and peaceful dying precludes all doubt in regard to the wisdom and goodness concerned in the divine administration; it might rather suggest the question why such a Christian was detained here so long—why kept in a state of discipline, and subjected to the conditions of our frail mortality, a full half century after she had manifestly attained meetness for heaven. Let this suggestive inquiry be our guide in some concluding remarks.

1. A similar difficulty may be felt, and a similar question asked, in regard to all regenerate persons, and even infants, who, as we confidently believe and teach, are entitled, under the Christian economy, to the heavenly inheritance. This statement of the question in its broader comprehension will, to most minds, relieve it of all embarrassments. All well-instructed Christians know that a connection between the present and future—between the training on earth and the deeds done in the body, and the occupations, the enjoyments, and the rewards of heaven—is fully recognized in the Bible. Some Christian virtues, too, and graces, must have their origin and growth, if any where, in this world. Patience implies toils and trials; courage, the presence of dangers and enemies; the forgiveness of injuries, oppositions and persecutions by wicked men. These attributes of Christian character, so often and so earnestly inculcated in the Word of God, are manifestly the product of the divine grace in this our probationary career. This world is their proper sphere of operation, and heaven has no wrongs, nor dangers, nor temptations wherewith to test or to trouble its redeemed and sanctified inhabitants.

They have much to learn of the genius of the Gospel, who mistake the beginning of the Christian life for its consummation. "Growth in grace," progress, improvement, is its primary law, which acts upon every genuine child of God throughout his entire pilgrimage, and with accumulating force as he approaches the end of his probation. The earlier stages of Christian experience are usually much occupied in conflicts with temptation and unbelief; in eradicating irreligious habits, the growth of former years; in bringing under control the exorbitance of appetite and passion; and in mastering, both in theory and practice, "the first principles of the Gospel of Christ." Improvements like these are very appreciable by the young convert himself, and they constitute a remarkable era in his outward history. In truth, however, this visible

movement is little more than a preparation for the real life-work of the genuine Christian. It is not till these preliminaries are disposed of that he can command the repose of spirit, and fixedness of attention, needful to the introspection and spiritual culture involved in the very idea of "growth in grace." It hence occurs that apparent progress in piety is often greatest when little real improvement is made beyond some external reforms, needful in many cases, it may be, to bring up the incipient piety to the ordinary standard of a decent morality. It is when these victories over outward sins have been achieved, that the sincere soul, set free from this grosser work, finds itself competent to engage in good earnest in the prosecution of that spiritual warfare to which all the years of our pilgrimage are to be consecrated; in which inborn corruption is to be subdued, and every thought brought into captivity to Christ. It is in these unseen struggles of the "inner man" that the world is to be conquered, and the flesh crucified, and the nature purified and disciplined, and made meet for communion with God, and for the undefiled heritage which he has prepared for his children. In such conflicts, and in the diligent culture of the holy affections and unseen graces, which in the sight of God constitute the true elements of Christian character, do I suppose the long life of our departed friend has been employed even to its termination. What victories she has won over sinful nature; to what heights of piety she has attained; to what intimacies of converse and communion with Christ she has been admitted; for what a glorious exaltation under the heavenly economy to which she is now subject she has been fitted by this, her protracted warfare—we may not be able even to conjecture till we, too, shall put on immortality. We may, however, be allowed to express our belief, that within the memory of the present generation she has not been known to perform an action, or speak a word, or manifest a temper, not in harmony with her Christian profession. It is probably more than half

a century since Mrs. Garrettson laid aside every weight and the sins that easily beset us, and entered with an unreserved devotion upon the race set before her. Those who had the happiness of enjoying her intimate acquaintance—those who were accustomed to meet with her where the "children of God spake often one to another"—know well that through these long years she has not rested from her labors as victor upon a conquered field. They will testify that, with no intermission, she has to the last been eminently active, watchful, and self-denying; that she, more than those around her, "prayed without ceasing;" that she constantly "hungered and thirsted after righteousness;" that her religious experience and utterances were ever fresh, edifying, and spiritual; that she was reverent, humble, grateful, trustful, filial, quite above the examples of our current Christianity. For myself, I seemed always, when in her presence, in what (for want of some more descriptive term) has often been denominated a *religious atmosphere.* In addition to these statements, let us remember it is of the very genius of Christianity, that the path of "the righteous shineth more and more unto the perfect day." In the midst of this ever-increasing light, ever gazing upon the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, and ever yielding herself up to the attractions of the cross, it may be said of Mrs. Garrettson, rather than of most others, that her "conversation" was in heaven. There, for these many years, her heart has been—there, her treasure. What is the inference offered by this discussion to promote our edification and comfort? I believe—I can not doubt—that our friend has continued to grow in grace, and that under favoring influences of ever-increasing efficiency, quite to the close of her career; and that she has borne with her to heaven a maturity of piety, a depth, a compass, a symmetry of Christian character, and a large acquaintance with God her Savior, not unexampled, but rare in the Church. This, as it seems to me, is a special honor conferred by God upon

his aged servant, that in the highest sense her force was not abated, nor her eye dim—that her sun never declined, but she rejoiced in mid-heaven as it shone upon her triumphant departure. Such an honor is to be esteemed a blessed compensation for all the ill and strife of a hundred years.

2. We perceive, then, that long life has been to our sainted friend a gift of inestimable value. If, however, she was spared so long for the perfection of her ever-growing piety, we must also believe that she remained to be a blessing to others.

1. By her prayers. Irreligious, and yet more, skeptical men, deny the efficacy of prayer, as a disturbing force which God will not allow to thwart his wise, unchangeable plans. In truth, however, the efficacy of prayer forms an integral part of his plans. It is one of the forces calculated on to carry out his beneficent designs, and it can not disturb them. Job's offending friends were commanded by God to offer sacrifices, with this promise as their warrant for success, "My servant Job shall pray for you. Him will I accept." Diseases have been cured, life prolonged, judgments averted, and needful rain poured out on parched fields in answer to prayer. The effusion of the Holy Spirit is expressly made dependent on prayer. The piety of the worshiper, too, gives efficacy to prayer. The holiness of Christ qualifies Him to be our intercessor, else must he have offered sacrifice for his own sins. We know, too, that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Supported by such authorities, I can not hesitate to express the opinion that the prayers of the departed have been instrumental in conferring signal blessings on the living; and as her piety manifestly gained strength and intensity to the end of her life, so may we assuredly infer that her supplications became more and more prevalent with God as she approached more nearly to his image from year to year. What an element of power did her elevated piety impart to her inter-

cessions for the Church! What efficacy have they given to the preaching of the Gospel! Few persons feel for the Church as she did. She was in no trite, ordinary sense "a mother in Israel." She loved Zion with an intense affection. She had such a sense of the importance of preaching the Gospel and upholding its institutions, as few Christians ever manifest; and I am quite sure that many of Christ's embassadors have been strengthened and encouraged by knowing that the prayers and sympathies of such a saint were with them. The conversion of sinners and sanctification of believers were to her the most significant of realities; and she felt, spoke, and prayed in regard to them as, with such vivid impressions, she must.

This Church has no doubt lost, in a female almost one hundred years old, who for several years was mostly confined at home, and could seldom *hear* the word when present at public worship, one of its strongest pillars. It does not, I trust, lack active, devoted, vigorous men and women; but has it one such intercessor left? one so mighty with God? one who so loved the Savior and blood-bought souls? one such Miriam to hold up hands that are ready to fall? If so, it will prove a vital Church.

But what has specially impressed me in my long acquaintance with Mrs. Garrettson was her unfaltering concern for the salvation of her very large circle of relatives. She seemed to possess peculiar strength of affection, and to extend it to *all of her relatives*. This is not very usual. Large family connections become split up by diverse interests, and tastes, and creeds. In my frequent and protracted visits at the hospitable house now so desolate, I always had occasion to remark the strong interest felt by its godly mistress in the family connections to the remotest degrees of relationship; in the young as well as the old; in the gay, thoughtless boys and girls, as well as the older and more sober-minded, who delighted so much to visit their venerable *aunt*, as so many affectionate-

ly called her. She always said something to them or about them; there was ever something in her look or tone which indicated her lively solicitude for their salvation. She has, for years, seemed to me to be eminently a *family intercessor*. And oh! what blessings has God already poured on many of them, and what greater may He now have in store for those favored ones in whose behalf this beloved servant has spent so many holy seasons in prayer! For myself, I confess it has been a source of joy and gratitude to me that those most dear to me have been sharers in such a benefit. A decided, unfaltering Christian for nearly three quarters of a century, she had triumphed over her own constitutional and habitual infirmities. Her tastes, her conversation, her daily life, were all consecrated. She had trodden Satan under foot, and walked long in daily communion with God; from this goodly height of piety, on this Pisgah, with the land of promise full in her eye, it was that our sainted friend spoke and wrestled with her covenant-keeping God in behalf of her kindred according to the flesh. Was this an old age spent in vain? I trust there are living witnesses here to the efficacy of her prayers. I trust that many more will yet be given to Christ in answer to her supplications while she was yet with us. Now she is removed to heaven, we know not if she is allowed to pray more for those she loved so well—if she can spare a note from the song of the Lamb, now her absorbing theme, in behalf of those she has left behind. Let her example, at least, still lead them to the cross.

2. It is by her high, unspotted, beautiful example, that our departed friend "being dead, yet speaketh;" and I trust in God that she will long continue to speak effectually to this community and to the circle of her acquaintance, and especially to her kindred. I can not doubt that they especially, who have had the high privilege of knowing her more intimately than others, will retain a lively and grateful remembrance of a character as pure, and blameless, and at-

tractive as any they are likely to look upon in this world. I feel confident that, of those who hear me, there are some who will strive to follow such a pattern; some who will resolve to model their young lives by it. I think, too, that when those shall have passed away, their children, and their children's children will hear of the gracious life and the triumphant death of her who lies in the embraces of death before us, and will cherish these traditions of family piety with as pure a gratification as any which the revered memory of their ancestors may awaken.

But the utility of such an example is a topic which belongs rather to the past than to the future. Christian example is much relied on in the Gospel economy as an instrument for the promotion of piety. A large class of persons habitually distrust all religious professions, and they listen with much caution to the inculcations of the pulpit. No matter how faithful or how able the preacher, he is often regarded as performing a mere professional function, even when he most truly exhibits the beautiful sentiments and pure morals of the Gospel. His earnestness, his tenderness, his argument, pass for little more than conventional or professional decencies, which it is creditable to exhibit, but which are received with many grains of allowance. It is of God's great mercy that we can refer persons of this skeptical turn to living, unostentatious exemplifications of the truths which we so unsuccessfully reiterate. These silent preachers excite no suspicion, and are likely to awaken no opposition, if their piety is of a graceful as well as of a pure type. If at first the stricter rule of life and the higher moral bearing provoke criticism or sneers, some years of consistent, unfaltering piety seldom fail of putting the foe to silence. Eminently has our departed friend performed for her generation this good service in her Master's cause. She adopted at the outset a course of religious life more decided and stricter than that which prevailed around her. Conformity to the world, amusements

and associations, by most religious persons held to be quite compatible with a Christian profession, she rejected with all the decision and earnestness of thorough conviction. Such a beginning could not fail of exciting distrust and opposition, if not ridicule and persecution. It is natural, perhaps, to conclude that persons who are so very exact and uncompromising lack depth and consistency of piety; that they forget the weightier matters of the law amid such scrupulous tithing of mint and cummin. It is commonly prophesied, that they who take such burdens upon them at the commencement of the race, must soon break down. Without knowing precisely what happened sixty years ago, we can not doubt that these and many such surmisings were felt, if not uttered, in regard to Mrs. Garrettson. How completely, how triumphantly were they refuted long ago by her consistent, powerful example! She never swerved from her steadfastness. She never abated a single jot or tittle from her strictness and her opposition to the world's vanities. She maintained her high position to the last; and yet who, within the memory of man, has lisped a suspicion of her piety? Who has thought she might some day prove a hypocrite or an enthusiast? We should as soon have expected to see the laws of the universe changed, as to see her deviate from her uprightness. Infidelity, sectarianism, profligacy itself stood confounded in the presence of such a living, lasting, irreproachable example, held out now to the gaze of two or three generations. For us and for our fathers, this example, exhibited on no obscure theatre, has demonstrated that a self-denying, cross-bearing piety, which gives all for Christ, and takes Christ for all and in all—which puts on the Lord Jesus, making no "provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof"—conflicts with none of the virtues or the amenities of life; that it is compatible with "whatsoever things are honest, and lovely, and of good report;" that it is no enemy to any of the charities, the graces, or the accomplishments that constitute the peculiar charm and power

of cultivated female character. Now this is a conviction much needed in the Church, as well as in the world—needed more, perhaps, in the early religious days of Mrs. Garrettson than it is now, but needed now and always. I believe that no female in this country has done more to produce and propagate this conviction than she, in the presence of whose lifeless remains I utter this testimony. She has been the source of an influence which was most appreciable, perhaps, in her own religious and family circle, but which operated very extensively beyond it. Had she lived her almost century for this single object, it had been a life of peculiar usefulness and honor.

3. I can not avoid the conclusion that the latter years of Mrs. Garrettson have exhibited one of the most attractive instances it has been my good fortune to notice, of a beautiful Christian old age. Her religion was so vital and pervading, that it seemed always young, always instinct with the vivacity, the freshness, and the joyousness of perpetual youth; and her religion stamped its impress upon her whole character. Her mental, and even her physical powers seemed to be renewed day by day, by the omnipotent grace which so refreshed her soul with living waters, and made her body the temple of the Holy Ghost. To this established dominion of controlling grace I ascribe it, that Mrs. Garrettson was, to the day of her death, exempt beyond most other aged persons, from the weaknesses and vices of old age. She had not the slightest infusion of captiousness, or complaining, or discontent, or egotism. With all her strictness and her saintly bearing, she was as gentle and meek, and kind and amiable, as an angel's presence. Playful childhood, and gay, buoyant youth rejoiced in her society, and coveted the happiness of being visitors and guests under her hospitable roof.

Her presence was not felt as a restraint, though it effectually awed down every tendency to rudeness or impropriety; and where she was I never heard a sneer at things sa-

cred, or a slander, or saw a look of disrespect. Her essential gentility, blended with her sweet piety, seemed to render impossible for the time what in other places may have been but too common with some of her visitants. Amid all this freedom from constraint, there was no deference done to the worldliness or irreligion of the guest. The family altar, the earnest grace, the good books, the religious topics which constituted the staple of conversation—the evening's occupation for the mission, or the Sunday-school, or the poor, as well as the frequent personal, loving appeal, all showed how entirely religion was the absorbing idea.

I would not pass unnoticed another feature of Mrs. Garrettson's piety, which shone with peculiar lustre in her later years—her large catholicity and absolute exemption from sectarian bigotry. Among her most cherished, honored Christian friends, with whom she took sweet counsel and rejoiced in a common hope, were representatives of nearly every religious denomination in the land. She gladly listened to their ministry, and extended to them all the tokens of Christian confidence and affection. Her devout, grateful spirit was wont to rejoice at the prosperity and increasing usefulness of the Protestant Churches, under whatever name they raised their voice against sin and exalted the atoning sacrifice. I offer this testimony to the liberal, eminently unsectarian spirit of our deceased friend, as a tribute of justice to her character, of which this has always appeared to me a prominent and very attractive feature. In giving expression to this sentiment, which an acquaintance of twenty years has only served to strengthen, I am not unaware that some of Mrs. Garrettson's friends, less intimate with her private religious habits and opinions than with her general character, have supposed that her decided preference for the Church in which she had cast her lot, as the result of intelligent investigation and clear conviction of duty, was hardly compatible with any very cordial sympathy with other branches of

the Christian family. This conclusion does injustice to the memory of the deceased, and it arises from an imperfect appreciation of the special character of her piety. That was eminently social. She delighted in holding frequent, intimate converse with devout, earnest souls who evinced in their life and experience the work of the Holy Spirit.

From sueh associations she evidently derived some of the most beautiful traits of her own rare piety. Next after the revealed word of God, she reverenced the testimonies of the simple-hearted, humble, self-denying followers of the Savior; and she was a meek and thankful learner of the deep lessons derived from this source. I think she was accustomed, beyond most other Christians of my acquaintance, to look in this direction for a measure of that wisdom which God conceals from the wise and prudent, that he may reveal it to babes; and I know that she rejoiced in this intimate fellowship with humble, pious souls, as an invaluable means of nourishing the Christian affections, of banishing sloth and lukewarmness, of quickening her spiritual perceptions to a constant alertness in worship and duty, and for maintaining incessant communion with heavenly things, and a vivid assurance of acceptance with God, always regarded by her as prime necessaries of the spiritual life. Mrs. Garrettson's ardent attachment to the Church was, I am sure, greatly strengthened by the special provision made in its institutions for this quickening of individual piety by frequent contact with whatever fervency of spirit may exist in any of its members. Such helps to the growth in clear, genial, Christian experience, were certainly well adapted to endear to her these special means of grace, but they were, at the same time, yet more eminently fitted to foster a large and catholic spirit. Piety, at once so ardent and social, can not satisfy its cravings with names, and forms, and traditions. It is therefore the natural foe of sectarian bigotry, which makes these its idols, and measures its spiritual prosperity by the intensity

of its distaste for all deviations from model orthodoxy. Without impairing the strength of denominational ties, heartfelt religion does, by the force of an inherent law, traverse these vanishing lines, and ally itself by gracious affinities to all who bear the Master's image. The least tinge of bigotry is, as it seems to me, theoretically incompatible with the type of piety for which Mrs. Garrettson was distinguished throughout her long religious life; nor do I believe that any Christian of the present day has more entirely escaped this hateful contagion. I will repeat that no feature of her beautiful old age was more characteristic and attractive than the fervent Christian charity which blessed and cheered her long career quite to its closing hour with an ever-increasing radiance. Such virtues are too rare and too precious at the present day—I fear I must add, especially in middle life and old age—to be omitted in our estimate of Mrs. Garrettson's character, where they shone so conspicuously. How many professors of religion, who begin their race with at least some hopeful measure of this catholic spirit, utterly neglect its cultivation, and offer to our view, as their most observable marks of religious development and growth, a growing exclusiveness, which, in the maturity of life, or, if not before, in old age, has become bigotry so intense and impracticable as to deny Christian recognition and fellowship to the great body of Christ's redeemed people. We should learn lessons of caution from such lamentable perversions of the Christian character, and be provoked to godly emulation as often as we look to the bright example of our departed friend for encouragement and instruction.

I said that Mrs. Garrettson's mental as well as moral powers seemed to be ever fresh from the holy influence of her piety. This was remarkably exemplified in her love of nature. She rejoiced in every beautiful thing which her eye beheld in heaven above or on earth beneath. The return of spring-time brought to the venerable centenarian a tide

of satisfaction as exuberant as she might have felt on the May-day of her fifteenth year. It was a touching sight to look upon her tall, erect form, as, during her early morning promenade in the flower-garden, she rejoiced in the sweet sights and odors that made nature glad around her, or stooped to gather bouquets for her guests, or to adorn the breakfast-table. She saw God in all nature's loveliness, and her lustrous eye would sparkle to the last as she joyfully and devoutly ascribed to Him the beauties so lavishly bestowed on the region around her. What rendered all doubly delightful, she evidently enjoyed what belonged to others as keenly as her own; and I am sure she felt a lively satisfaction in the happiness and well-being of the humblest of her neighbors, hardly less than themselves.

With such a spirit she could not fail to maintain a salutary influence to the last, for she maintained her interest in all that affected the good of others, which is the true secret of influence.

It would be thought a remarkable omission in the briefest sketch of Mrs. Garrettson's character to pass unnoticed one of its most prominent features—her hospitality, to which, however, I only refer, because in her, more than in most others, it rose to the dignity of a Christian virtue. She was seldom alone; for several months in the year her house was usually crowded with family and religious friends. Few such examples remain among us of the free, genial hospitality which is generally thought to have graced the olden time more than it does the present. Many will long remember this venerable mansion as the scene of delightful social intercourse, where acquaintances were formed, and friendships contracted, very pleasant and profitable; where clergymen and private Christians, of different churches, learned to forget sect, and admire the Savior in the delightful experiences and recognitions of Christian fellowship. "Behold how good and pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in

unity!" was the sentiment of which these delightful reunions were wont most frequently to remind us. Religion, mutual edification, and enjoyment, and the promotion of Christ's kingdom, as they were the ruling ideas of Mrs. Garrettson's life, entered into all her social and domestic arrangements, as their sole and vital principles. Opportunities were multiplied for family and social worship. A lecture in the parlor, or a sermon or prayer-meeting in the neighboring schoolhouse, was had whenever practicable, in the fullest confidence that nothing would be more agreeable to the guest, and as the very best provision that could be made to promote his gratification. Such was usually the prevalence of graceful, unobtrusive, Christian influence, that every one caught the dominant sympathy for good things. With many it was, no doubt, a transient emotion, and passed away with the occasion as a bright illusion, which could hardly fail, however, of leaving at least a pleasant remembrance of divine realities. With many more, I doubt not, the impression was lasting, and exerted a permanent influence over the character. What added to the moral power of these social and domestic arrangements, and, without seeming to design it, imparted to them a positive religious character, was the regular recurrence of the class-meeting and the Sunday-school, for the accommodation of the neighborhood, to which one apartment was always consecrated.

Mrs. Garrettson's charity was no less remarkable than her hospitality, and, like it, was eminently Christian. I have the best reason to believe that her liberality in supporting the institutions of religion, and in relieving the needy, was always as great as her pecuniary means would permit. She also devoted the largest part of her time and personal exertion to the same objects, and, what is still less common, her doors were always open to the unfortunate.

All who were much in the habit of visiting the house will remember to have met there, from time to time, some victim

of oppression or misfortune—perhaps a foreign refugee waiting to obtain employment, or an invalid for the return of health—perhaps an orphan child, or a bereaved family. These were, for the time, objects of chief solicitude, for whose physical comfort, and yet more for their moral well-being, the whole family movement was directed.

I mention here, as exceedingly characteristic of Mrs. Garrettson, and as evidence of the enduring strength and vivacity of her mental powers, that she continued to the close of life to take a lively interest in public affairs. She read the newspapers with the regularity of a practiced politician, and formed very decided opinions of men and measures. I was recently much impressed with her remarks upon the succession of revolutions which have swept over Europe within the last year or two. They were evidently the subject of many of her earnest thoughts and prayers, as likely, not only to elevate enslaved nations, but to favor the spread of religious liberty and the introduction of a pure Christianity. In every thing that concerned her own country, her deepest feelings were enlisted. Hers was a patriotism born amid the stirring scenes and profound excitements of the war of Independence. She had been acquainted with Washington and Jay, and many of the ruling spirits of that day, and the gallant Montgomery, whose blood flowed early in the great struggle for freedom, was a favorite brother-in-law. These circumstances had no doubt much influence in forming, if we may use such language in speaking of a woman, her political opinions and character. The strength, intensity, and dignity of these might be denominated Roman, but for the profounder Christian sentiment with which her thoughts and conversation were imbued whenever her country and its interests were the theme. I have reason to believe that her country and its rulers were remembered in her daily prayers with a fidelity and fervent devotion little known to the great body of professing Christians. We might indulge flattering hopes

in regard to the perpetuity of our unexampled national blessings, if the great duty of praying for public men and for the peace of our Jerusalem, which is so solemnly enjoined upon the Church, were as faithfully performed by all its members.

One who had enjoyed more than others favorable opportunities for knowing the deceased well, said to me that she thought the most remarkable trait of her old age was deep humility. This was precisely the remark which I had frequently been led to make. She possessed a strong and cultivated intellect, was well read, and especially so on religious subjects, and she retained to the last a complete and unimpaired use of her mental faculties. So, at least, it appeared to me. I was unable to perceive any decay in her powers during the twenty years of my acquaintance with her. Add to this, that the most intelligent and experienced Christians and ministers ever felt and manifested the greatest deference for her judgment and counsel. How natural—how almost unavoidable was it, under such circumstances, to acquire a measure of self-reliance incompatible with great humility! For this virtue, however, Mrs. Garrettson was pre-eminently distinguished. Deeply taught in all the great truths of revealed, experimental religion, she was the most teachable of all who sat with her at the feet of Jesus. Every minister who clearly, earnestly, and lovingly preached the cross, was sure to win golden opinions from her; and she seemed desirous of learning something about the way of salvation from every traveler toward Zion. She manifested profound respect for the religious experience of common, unlettered Christians, because she regarded this as a field in which the grace of God bestowed equal honor upon minds of very unequal capacity. I have looked on with intense interest and pleasure, to observe the docility with which she received lessons from persons greatly her inferiors in intellect, knowledge, and Christian attainments. It was manifestly because she

thought she saw in them evidence of a deep piety which was not likely to be unaccompanied by divine teaching.

Finally, I have known few Christians in whose theology, experience, and daily life, Christ occupied so exalted a place. He was literally the Alpha and Omega—the beginning and the end of her religion. She was wont to speak of her Savior with the profoundest reverence, and yet with an undertone of intense affection which constantly reminded one of Mary, the sister of Lazarus, or of John, the disciple whom Jesus loved. It was this that gave to her piety its marked —I may say, its *characterizing* peculiarity. You would have thought, from her humble, abasing views of herself, that she would likely enough be a doubting, troubled Christian all the days of her pilgrimage. Nothing was farther from the reality. I never heard her express a doubt of her acceptance and prospects of heaven. It is my impression that she lived on, from her conversion to her almost patriarchal age, ever assured of her being a child of God. Her peculiar views of Christ naturally led to this confidence. He was, to all her thoughts and conceptions, *such a Savior*—so divinely compassionate, so mighty to redeem and save—as quite to banish all distrust, and put out of the question her own unworthiness as being any obstacle to the displays of His grace. I have not known a Christian at once so humble and prayerful, and withal so fearless and confident. This was the spirit that pervaded her daily life. It was also the spirit that reigned ascendant in her dying hour. She triumphed at the thought of dying, because she clung to the Savior with so divine a hold. Her last intelligible utterances were made up of what made up her life—earnest prayer and triumphant assurance. "Come, Lord Jesus! come, Lord Jesus! come quickly!" she cried, with eyes and hands raised toward heaven. Soon after, clapping her hands in holy triumph, she three times exclaimed exultingly, "He comes! He comes! He comes!"

IV.

CHRISTIANS ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

Ye are the light of the world.—MATT., v., 14.

THE world itself is dark. "Darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people." The apostle Paul speaks of "the darkness of this world" not as an accident, or an attribute of our moral condition here, but as its essence and principal element, as wholly pervading and overshadowing all human society. It is no wonder that the dwellers in this dim, dismal region "go astray from their birth," for "he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth." "The god of this world hath blinded the eyes of them that believe not." It was in reference to the spiritual condition of beings to whom such language was universally applicable, and to the merciful designs he entertained toward them, that the adorable Savior announced himself as "the light of the world." He that followed Jesus should walk no more in darkness, but should have "the light of life." Christ, in the season of his incarnation, illuminated the palpable obscure by his miracles, by his testimony of the Father, by his evangelical doctrines and morals, by his pure example and deeds of mercy, and by bringing "life and immortality to light." When he ascended up on high, having fulfilled his earthly mission, he devolved this function on his faithful disciples. The Church, itself radiant with the word and the spirit of God, became thenceforth the medium of that blessed illumination before which, in the large plans of the divine benevolence, all moral darkness is to be chased away from the face of the whole earth. "Ye are the light of the world."

The Gospel, of which the Christian Church is thus made the depository and sole agent, is "*the true light*," in distinction from all other systems, whether of religion or morals. This was and is its grand distinction. Other systems could never attain to this excellence. They were for the most part positively and universally mischievous in their entire action and tendencies. They led to evil, and that continually. As guides to virtue and mere worldly happiness they were inadequate and treacherous. But it was chiefly when the uninspired teachers who preceded the Christian dispensation assumed to be teachers of religion, that they became, one and all, "blind leaders of the blind." They only led men away from God. The objects of worship, the forms and rites, the methods of propitiation which they prescribed, interposed so many obstacles in the way of true piety. It is very remarkable that the religious principles and observances of idolatrous nations tend almost always to the subversion of the moralities and virtues which their philosophy sometimes inculcates. In every idol they raise up a rival to the Almighty; and when the fundamental doctrines of all true religion are thus corrupted, it must of course follow that all progress will be into error and darkness. Christ is the "true light," so far, at least, as religion and virtue are concerned; and the Gospel, as living in the faith and developed in the conduct of the sincere followers of Jesus, is, and is intended to be, under the present economy of the divine Providence, the sole guide and safeguard of the human race—it is "the light of life."

So much, I suppose, I may take for granted, that we are indebted to Christianity for whatever of sound piety and good morals may exist in the civilized world. I fear, however, there may be more of skepticism in regard to another claim that I am disposed to assert on behalf of the Gospel, that no really valuable improvement, no social melioration or progress can be effected by other than Christian agencies. It

may well be doubted, I think, whether Greece, or Rome, or Hindostan, or China, was ever the better for its religion or philosophy; whether the state was better governed, or society at large more refined or happy; whether the domestic circle was richer in the pure affections and sweet charities which constitute its bliss and its peculiar charm. Good government, I am quite ready to admit, may do a great deal for humanity; so may a wise system of education; so may voluntary associations with benevolent objects; not, however, because they are professedly divorced from the Gospel, but because they have really manifold alliances with it; because they act upon, and must fashion their measures and ministries to the sentiments and wants of a Christian people. A law that should do violence to the religious sense of the country could not be enacted, or, if enacted, could not be enforced. A society that should be formed upon an avowedly anti-Christian basis would, unless protected by its insignificance, be put down, either by public sentiment or by the mob; while parents, who never see the inside of a church, will yet contend might and main against the exclusion of the Bible from our common schools. So much, at least, has the Gospel achieved among us. It has won an acknowledged authority over the general conscience. It has become supreme in the *theory* of popular ethics, if not in our actual morals, and it thus very beneficially fulfills its mission as "the light of the world." It irradiates where it does not purify, and gives law to opinion where it fails of gaining any permanent authority over the life. Thus it is that Christianity, or its impersonation, the whole company of true believers constituting the Church, sheds forth upon the entire mass of human society a very benignant and conservative influence, while it may yet be true that it becomes "the power of God unto salvation" only to the few upright souls who truly believe in the Savior, and bear his cross. It has breathed a measure of its own spirit into our laws and insti-

tutions, into our opinions and literature, into our sentiments and customs.

Such are the incidental and indirect benefits which the Gospel has conferred upon society. They are great beyond all computation. Christianity is, even in this lower sense, the grand source and medium of all that is true and noble in theory and beneficent in action. It is "the light of the world." But the distinctively religious function of the Church is by far its highest. It "is the light of life." *True spiritual Christians constitute the great living development and the recognized representatives of Christianity, and the entire work of its manifestation and diffusion is committed to them.* The existence of the Church through so many centuries of persecutions and political revolutions, a "city set on a hill," with its pure doctrines, and impressive ordinances, and living ministry, exhibiting to the successive generations of men at least a goodly likeness of what Christ and his apostles taught and ordained, is a deeply impressive fact, which we can not afford to lose as an argument, because so many will use it as an idol. No one can reasonably doubt that this has been one of the chosen means of the great Author of our faith for making a manifestation of his truth to the understandings and consciences of men. The light has often been dim, but never wholly extinguished. Seasons of revival and reformation have succeeded seasons of spiritual darkness and prevailing corruptions; and many good men whose history has not been written have, no doubt, been raised up in every age to give their testimony for Jesus. Christianity has had, probably, throughout its entire history, its epochs of light and power, when impressions were made upon the masses as well as the schools, too deep to be effaced in one or two generations. God has ever taken care of the Church, and the gates of hell have not prevailed against it; yet it may be confessed that, upon the whole, and taking into our account its resources, divine and human, the Church has made

only a tardy and dishonorable progress in the fulfillment of its mission. Its light has struggled, and grown dim amid the surrounding and encroaching darkness. It could not be otherwise, for its light is but another name for its piety, and that has commonly been shamefully and wickedly low.

The aggressive power of the Gospel is dependent upon the personal piety of its disciples more than upon any other or all other conditions. It therefore provides for, and expects in them the highest style of virtue and of performance. Our holy religion has the advantage over all mere worldly theories or systems, because it encourages the aspirant with higher motives. A man will make and can make efforts to secure any great object, which would be impracticable on lower incentives. He can do more and better to win a fortune than he can for only his daily bread. It is easier to play the hero at the head of an army where great honors are to be gained, than in the ranks where distinctions and emoluments are alike out of the question. The Gospel takes advantage of this inborn principle, and seeks to cultivate the highest virtues by proposing the highest rewards. It demands, and it has a right to demand, that they who enter upon a race where white robes, and celestial crowns, and a heavenly heritage are to be won, should run swiftly and perseveringly. In point of fact, the man who seeks after purity and moral excellence on Christian principles, has a decided advantage over all others, and his success is answerable to his better position. It would be unphilosophical in the highest degree to expect any other result.

The Christian has another special guarantee of proficiency and success in the fundamental principle of his religion. If a Christian at all, he is a *man of faith*. He has a sure trust in God and his promises, which are an inexhaustible fountain, not of encouragement only, but of courage. His hands never grow weak in their proper work. He is ever brave, and cheerful, and whole-hearted, assured

of ultimate triumph over all obstacles and all foes. Not so the unbeliever, who, if he sometimes aspires to the culture of a lofty, sterling virtue, is often doubtful of ultimate success; and if he succeeds to some extent, his fabric lacks solidity and breadth of basis, and gives less hope of permanence. His most usual ground of failure, however, is found in the infirmity of his own nature and the strength of his own passions. Here, again, the advantage of working on Christian principles becomes apparent. If weak himself, the grace of God is sufficient for all the exigencies of the Christian, and to this his position fully entitles him. He encounters his own strong passions, and perverse habits, and low appetencies —he combats with all temptations, and braves all opposition and all danger, with a cheering assurance that the Holy Spirit is his great auxiliary; that, if his own power is small, God's is omnipotent; that in every conjuncture where he wants help—help, divine help is pledged to him; that the deadliest struggles and the sorest distresses constitute the precise condition under which Christ will come to his rescue if he only believes.

These, it is obvious, are special facilities secured to the Christian by the good economy under which he works, and it would be strange, and a reproach to the name he bears, if he should not signalize himself above the man of the world, who can trust only to an arm of flesh. God expects him to excel others, and in truth he does excel all others whenever he makes a proper use of his immense resources. The world is reluctant enough to admit this claim, but the true saint extorts the admission from all ingenuous minds. Here, then, properly begins the manifestation of religious influence and light. The presence of a holy man purifies—the odor of his quiet, loving spirit perfumes the atmosphere where he dwells. His silent example is eloquence—his unobtrusive virtues are a halo and marvelous glory about his head. The world, as often as it can spare a glance or a thought from

the idolatry of its absorbing interests, will bend it upon this monitory spectacle—upon the man who, in the midst of the objects of sense, walks by faith, and evidently thinks more of Christ than of self.

This essential, indwelling godliness imparts its character and its own power to all the external conduct of the truly good man. It pervades his conversation—it sanctifies his intercourse and his relations with other men. His public and private duties, his charities, and his every-day virtues are armed with a certain moral efficiency—are instinct with a measure of the mind and the might that was in Christ Jesus. They become so many manifestations of the religious spirit and the Christian principle within. They multiply the luminous points in Christian character. They enlarge its shining surface, and supply its broad, radiant orb with golden beams. Almost the same things may be affirmed of the more strictly religious performances of a sincere, deeply-earnest Christian—of his attendance on public worship, his prayers, his sacraments, his songs of praise, and his Sabbath-keeping. Every religious act is redolent of costly incense, and glitters with the holy unction. It is invested with peculiar authority over the conscience of the spectator, and inspires a subduing awe, as if some discovery had been made of a divine presence. No room is left for any possible suspicion of hypocrisy or vain show, or of unfruitful, heartless formality; for there is a contagion in the spirit that is breathed forth which none can altogether escape.

Well may it be said of an individual Christian thus thoroughly furnished unto every good work, that he is "a burning and shining light." His orbit may be straitened, and his disk of no wonderful diameter; but he is one of the heavenly bodies, and divinely luminous. A Church composed of members such as I have described is the true centre of the Redeemer's system for enlightening and saving the world. He lived and died to establish a Church capable of this no-

ble function. He bought her and washed her with his own blood, and clothed her with garments of salvation. He laid her corner-stone upon the stained rock of Calvary. He made her the depository of his precious doctrines, and the heir expectant of his glory; and he transferred to her hands, in a very high and holy sense, the work of carrying out his own designs in behalf of a dying but redeemed race. He rose upon our dark sphere "the Sun of Righteousness." He said of himself, "I am the light of the world;" and he bequeathed this beneficent mission to his followers: "Ye are the light of the world." What Christ did, by his teaching and his miracles, during the season of his incarnation, his true disciples are now called upon to do by the power and beauty of their holiness, by sacrifices, and by all the ministries of a positive and aggressive Christianity. As a great spiritual fraternity, they are "a city set on a hill, which can not be hid" —a strong-hold and fortress of truth, whose high battlements and shining towers are seen from afar—from the wilderness and from the sea—by the wayfaring and the tempest-tost. The Church, with her ministry and her ordinances, is the beacon-light of successive generations—an imperishable historical monument of the life, and death, and resurrection of her Savior—the representative and heir of past Christian ages, and the trustee and witness for all to come. The Church, as such, has done more for civilization, and humanity, and righteousness, during the period of its existence on earth, than all human governments and laws. Through the spiritual members, of which alone the true Church is composed, this influence is multiplied and diffused, and they are, in a sense no less important, "lights of the world." Scattered every where throughout the masses of men, they leaven the whole. Full of earnestness, and love, and restless sympathies —prone to activity, to aggression, and to utterance, they can not but spread their opinions, and communicate their infelt sentiments and emotions. Ever in contact with the general

conscience, they shed light upon it, they arouse it, they hold up the high standard of divine morals, they compel the multitude to think of God and his tribunal. The world would gladly forget eternity, but it can not wholly succeed so long as it has in its midst so many who are visibly laboring for a heavenly inheritance—so many who die daily unto the world, that they may live unto Christ. Every Christian irradiates a certain sphere—is a link in the shining chain along which the electric influence of the Gospel is borne, in so many directions and degrees, to every household and every heart. It is chiefly through this silent emanation of light and power that the multitude are saved from absolute atheism. They can not but partake of sympathies, and fears, and opinions that prevail all around. None can wholly escape the contagion which fills the atmosphere, or remain wholly skeptical with regard to truths which reign over the general conscience. These convictions, which flow out spontaneously upon the people from the living Christianity that is among them, are the showers that prepare for the good seed of the forthcoming sower. To follow our figure, they are the dawn that precedes the day—the harbinger of the Sun of Righteousness, when he comes with healing in his wings.

II. I have hitherto dwelt upon the inherent fitness and great efficiency of living, earnest piety, in its proper function as the "light of the world." The duty of the Church and of individual Christians plainly follows from the premises so fully discussed. "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." This duty is performed well, just in proportion as the piety of the Church is deep, intent, and consistent. The Church illuminates the world by the manifestation of its piety, but its manifested can never exceed its real piety. Its power to fulfill this its most peculiar and essential function may therefore be accurately measured by the faith, zeal, and holiness of its members. A Church

may be what the world calls a strong Church in point of numbers and influence. A Church may be made up of men of wealth, men of intellect, men of power, high-born men, and men of rank and fashion; and, being so composed, may be, in a worldly sense, a very strong Church. There are many things that such a Church can do. It can launch ships, and endow seminaries. It can diffuse intelligence, can uphold the cause of benevolence, can maintain an imposing array of forms and religious activities. It can build splendid temples, can rear a magnificent pile, and adorn its front with sculptures, and lay stone upon stone, and heap ornament upon ornament, till the costliness of the ministrations at the altar shall keep any poor man from ever entering the portal. But, my brethren, I will tell you one thing that it can not do—it can not *shine*. It may glitter and blaze like an iceberg in the sun, but without inward holiness it can not shine. Of all that is formal and material in Christianity it may make a splendid manifestation, but it can not shine. It may turn almost every thing into gold at its touch, but it can not touch the heart. It may lift up its marble front, and pile tower upon tower, and mountain upon mountain; but it can not touch the mountains, and they shall smoke; it can not conquer souls for Christ; it can not awaken the sympathies of faith and love; it can not do Christ's work in man's conversion. It is dark in itself, and can not diffuse light. It is cold at heart, and has no overflowing and subduing influences to pour out upon the lost. And with all its strength, that Church is weak, and for Christ's peculiar work worthless. And with all its glitter of gorgeous array, it is a dark Church—it can not shine.

On the contrary, show me a Church poor, illiterate, obscure, unknown, but composed of praying people; they shall be men of neither power, nor wealth, nor influence; they shall be families that do not know one week where they are to get their bread for the next; but with them is the hiding of God's

power, and their influence is felt for eternity, and their light shines and is watched, and wherever they go there is a fountain of light, and Christ in them is glorified, and his kingdom advanced. They are his chosen vessels of salvation, and his luminaries to reflect his light.

In this view the true Church of Christ is ever delivering a silent but effective testimony. It stretches out its hands all the day long. The lustre of its example, the beauty of its holiness, the glory of its inheritance, the fervors of its zeal, have voices which "go forth into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." These are the sources of that ever-living energy imbosomed in the true Church, and its richest endowment from the Savior, in virtue of which it ever wields a truly apostolic authority over the consciences of men, and diffuses through the masses those incipient convictions which, in the day of merciful visitation, become effectual to the conversion of the soul.

As the ability of the entire company of believers, or of any single Church, to perform its duty to God and the world, depends upon their piety, even so it is with the individual Christian. If his religion be merely decent, and formal, and ostensible, it will be utterly powerless. If, on the contrary, it is heartfelt, intense, and impulsive, it will be irresistible, and its speechless eloquence will reach hearts and habitations where the pastor and his preaching can get no access. In this view the purest, meekest, most child-like man is often the mightiest. He who wrestles most earnestly with God in his closet is most likely to go forth to his converse with men anointed for his mission. His garments smell of the spices of Paradise. His face shines as the face of an angel, and he unavoidably becomes in his sphere "the light of the world." The humble Christian, without suspecting that he is fulfilling such a ministry, is ever acting upon others. To some family or individual he appears from day to day the impersonation of all they know or heed of saving

Christianity—the living epistle in which they read the character of the Gospel, its author, and his disciples. It is probably safe to affirm that every Christian holds a relation to some immortal soul, on which its final destiny is likely to turn. Father, brother, neighbor, superior or inferior, he is the man upon whose purity, or faith, or zeal, or consistency, or prayers, or faithful admonition, the salvation of another undying spirit is suspended. "Ye are the light of the world."

2. We must never cease to inculcate, both on the Church and on the individual, that all religious manifestation not proceeding from heartfelt piety must be utterly powerless, as well as unchristain, so far as the salvation of souls is concerned; and yet it is unquestionably true, that works of piety, no less than the religion of the soul, enter deeply into the great scheme of God for evangelizing the world. Religious light is to shine through "good works;" and, after all that is said in disparagement of good works, it is hard to see how, if they proceed from a pious motive and aim at pious ends, they may not be just as evangelical as the faith from which they spring. At any rate, they are one of the appointed ways of manifestation, not merely of the excellency, but also of the power of the Gospel; and, as every believer is bound to be as spiritual as he can, in order that he may do his part toward the needful illumination of the world, so is he bound to be as active as he can, that he may contribute in his measure to the carrying out of the great objects of Christ's kingdom. The watch-word which a great captain gave out on the day of battle to stir the hearts of his warriors, would answer well, with the change of a single word, for the motto of all Christians—"Christ expects every man to do his duty." And be sure there is a duty for every man to do. Small or great, rich or poor, it is just the same thing —*every one* is called out into action, and there will be guilt on his conscience and peril to souls somewhere if he holds back. Remember well, "ye are the light of the world." *God*

depends on you for the fulfilling of this function. He has made no other provision for it; and if you fail him, the world will be dark, and polluted, and damned. You hold the great remedy. You monopolize it for the benefit of the race. For all the ills of the pagan and of the Christian world, the Church is the great depository of all that has the skill and the efficacy to heal, and on this principle will our last reckoning proceed. And in regard to the outward evangelizing movement, that is mostly true which I have already affirmed of the inward grace and of the silent example—the most devoted, and the most earnest, and the most holy man is likely to do the most good without reference to other qualifications, apart from his piety. A stammering prayer, if it be full of faith—an ungraceful appeal to the sinner's conscience, if it be full of love—a small pecuniary contribution, if it carry with it the spirit and the blessing of the widow's mite—these, tried in the balance which God holds in his hand, outweigh all that the merely eloquent, or learned, or opulent can bring into his treasury from their shining stores. The truly converted soul is illuminated from on high, and it is also luminous, and in its sphere and measure a luminary. Whoever refuses to shine dishonors the Savior, and is in a way to be disowned by him. Are your resources small in gifts, in acquirements, in influence or wealth? It matters the less, if you are ready to consecrate all you have to God.

There is more in the spirit and the manner than in the amount. Let *your* light *so shine* as to glorify God. Do what you can, and do that cheerfully, heartily, joyfully, prayerfully, "as unto God." Only feel, and feel always, that your great business here is to promote the Redeemer's kingdom on the earth. Settle that in your hearts and in your habits, and then every thing will be done in order and in due proportion. Never imagine for a moment—abjure as a deadly heresy—the notion that you have nothing to do for the salvation of souls. So far from it, some soul is likely

to be damned if the humblest Christian fails in his duty. The onward movement of the good cause loses a portion of its momentum if a single heart or a single hand be withdrawn from the work. Every twinkling star gives its ray to the glories of a brilliant night: so let every converted soul indulge in the noble ambition of holding forth the word of life. Let him soar bravely up to his place in the Gospel firmament. Let him give out the light that is in him. Let him become a luminary, and pour his borrowed beams all around him upon the darkness of this world.

V.

THE GOSPEL THE BASIS OF CHARITY.*

And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.—2 Cor., viii., 5.

This text refers to a transaction very honorable to the infant churches of Macedonia, Greece, and Asia Minor. Judea, in common with some other parts of the Roman empire, had been visited by dearth and consequent scarcity. In such a calamity the persecuted Christians were likely to be special sufferers, deprived as they were of the sympathy, and exposed to the violent enmity of their Jewish countrymen, as well as of the Roman government. Under these circumstances, the disciples of Christ, in several of the neighboring countries, resolved to send them pecuniary assistance. More than a year had elapsed since these charitable collections were commenced, and the apostle Paul, who had been the prime mover in the enterprise, now desired to see the business completed, and the amount contributed sent to the sufferers. He refers, in terms of the highest commendation, to the liberality that had been displayed. The young churches had

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quite exceeded his highest anticipations, both in the sum contributed and in the spirit with which they had given. Our text announces the secret of this gratifying success. These liberal brethren, better than the apostle's most sanguine hopes, in the first place gave their own selves unto the Lord, and then to this good work of charity, according to the will of God. Here is disclosed the true ground of all efficient charity. *It is a religious obligation resting on the will of God.*

Humane feelings, or sympathy with the woes of the unfortunate, are, on various accounts, wholly inadequate as motives to beneficence. Men are very unequally, as well as sparingly, endowed with sympathy. Some find a positive gratification in the contemplation of suffering, and the exhibitions of cruelty; while the large majority look with singular indifference and apathy upon all the forms of distress and misfortune that do not infringe upon their own enjoyments, or invade the narrow circle of their own relatives and familiars. Of those who are most liberally endowed with the kindly emotions of pity, few acknowledge in the transient sentiment any authoritative call to action. They proceed no farther than to give some moderate indulgence to so creditable a feeling, and some words of condolence, or some tears to the sufferer; a method of dealing with these tender emotions most calculated to harden the heart and dry up the fountains of sensibility; for it is a fundamental law of our being, that the sympathy which does not find an outlet through some channel of beneficent action flows back upon its sources, and congeals about the well-springs of humanity and compassion.

Without dwelling farther upon this view of the subject, we are also to consider that charity, not acting on Christian principle, is liable to be disturbed and counteracted by selfishness, the strongest and most universal of human propensities. What we give to others, either in effort or money, we

subtract from our own means of enjoyment or aggrandizement, and self-love is likely to watch over such disbursements with a vigilance and strict economy little favorable to the claims of suffering humanity. In this unequal struggle between sympathy and covetousness—between one of the feeblest impulses and the most powerful of our passions—the final issue can not be doubtful. In such conflicts the worse principle is sure to obtain the mastery, favored as it always is by the conditions which human depravity imposes upon our efforts toward a virtuous life.

It is another drawback upon charities which have no sounder basis than mere human instincts, that these emotions can be effectually awakened in favor of such objects only as are contiguous or near to us, and such as appeal strongly to our sensitive nature, while invisible or distant sufferings, and moral wants, really the most urgent of any known to humanity, make but a feeble impression, or, what is more usual, are wholly overlooked. The tender sensibilities of our nature instinctively shrink away from communion with painful or disgusting scenes, while poverty, suffering, ignorance, vice, the most fit and needy objects of charity, as naturally fly the presence of opulence, comfort, and refinement. The destitute poor are to be found by those who have the nerve to look for them in hovels and garrets. Ignorant, rude vulgarity herds with its like in by-ways, while he who would rescue the wretched inebriate from the ruin that impends over him must direct his feet to dark back rooms and reeking cellars. There, and not in sunlit apartments, that front upon the thoroughfares of respectable business and honest citizens, may he find the gross appetite that quaffs the inebriating bowl and the profounder guilt that fills it. This mutual, strong repulsion between the fit objects for philanthropic effort and the humane feelings to which they appeal for succor, tends naturally to subvert the proper ends of charity, and does unquestionably exclude from the field of beneficent ef-

forts a multitude of persons by no means deficient in the endowments of a constitutional sympathy.

It is no less true that the misfortunes and vices which interpose this great barrier between these victims and the compassion of their fellow-men have, in many instances, a direct tendency to degrade and deprave the sufferer, till the contemplation of his character and condition provokes indignation and disgust rather than sympathy. Ignorance, and poverty, and disease, tend of themselves, in the absence of religious principle, to vulgarize the sentiments and lower the dignity of a human being; and when the results and concomitants of low vices and gross habits, as they often are, they lose their power to awaken pity, which is wont to reserve its tears for innocent, or, at the least, for interesting sufferers. Even a few instances of ingratitude, the most common fault of unworthy beneficiaries, are enough to freeze up the charity which springs from mere natural sympathy.

But the insufficiency of sympathetic feeling as the motive and basis of active charity is yet more apparent in the narrowness of its sphere of operation. Pity is moved by the sight or the story of actual or apprehended suffering, by physical wants, by sickness, by bereavements and misfortunes, while it takes no cognizance of that large class of far more pressing evils which are unattended by bodily or mental pain. It is a truth familiar to all, that the victims of many kinds and degrees of misfortune and suffering become insensible by use and habit. The sensibilities become hardened—the organs grow indurated. Even hunger, and thirst, and exposure, and poverty are constantly losing their power to annoy the sufferer, who finds, at least, a partial protection in the discipline of patience and submission to which he is subjected. It is thus that we become reconciled to the ills of our fellow-creatures. *Our* sympathies, like *their* susceptibilities, gradually lose their edge and vivacity. They become accustomed to endure, with diminished sensibility to pain and inconven-

ience—we to look on with slight emotion or absolute indifference.

But by far the larger portion of the ills of humanity, and those which appeal most strongly to benevolent interference, are quite unattended with physical or mental suffering. The victims are well content with their condition, and would be loth to accept the boon which charity offers. They do not ask our interference. They repel our offers of help. They esteem it no mercy that we come into the secret place of their sorrows. Intemperance, in its earlier stages, carries its devotees through successive scenes of exhilaration and festive delights, that often awaken envy rather than pity. The hereditary bondman, bereft as he is of the most precious immunities of our common humanity, often knows little of physical ills, and not unfrequently exhibits such indubitable evidence of thoughtless contentment as quite robs mere physical sympathy of its vocation. So, also, the children of vice, or ignorance, or orphanage accustomed to neglect and insubordination—to follow no law but impulse, and to seek associations and morality in the streets, acquire a keen relish for the sort of life they lead. Their tastes and habits are in harmony with their condition. They love their hopeless lot, and submit reluctantly to the guiding hand that volunteers to rescue them from impending ruin. In cases of this sort, there is no physical suffering such as is most potent to evoke strong sympathy and conciliate the charitable offices which are wont to originate in such a source. Most of all, the stranger to Christ, the decent man well to do in the world, at ease in his possessions, with a seared conscience and a hard heart, the rejecter of Christ, or he who has never heard the name of Christ as a Savior—most of all does he spurn the message of mercy with which Jesus bids us approach him. Now it is difficult, under circumstances like these, to work with any degree of earnestness or success. We can hardly, in the presence of so much contentment and

self-confidence—of such a high-toned and independent spirit —urge our mission of mercy, and instruction, and sympathy, and prayer, upon a fellow-creature. We need something stronger than mere human sympathy, when we are met by so many discouragements—where the sufferer himself denies that he suffers, claims to be well off, asks no higher and better boon than that which he is enabled to snatch from the circumstances with which the world has surrounded him.

And here it is that we feel the want of that provident, calculating benevolence, which finds its motives of action in what God has revealed concerning the permanent interests and immortal destinies of man. It is only from the elevation of Christian philanthropy that we obtain any just and comprehensive view of what our world of humanity really suffers and really wants. The moral ills that press so terribly upon the race, the spiritual destitution which, like the fulfillment of a doom overspreads three fourths of the globe, evils in comparison with which all mere physical suffering fades away before the keenest eye, find no adequate sympathy, and awaken no fitting effort in mere worldly philanthropists. Not a few, indeed, who make no profession of piety, and are not Christians in the highest sense of that term, are honorably distinguished for their munificent charities. We need not doubt that many are constitutionally prone to deeds of mercy, and find a luxury in doing on good native impulses what the Gospel enjoins on its disciples. Careful observation, however, and just reasoning will induce us to resolve such manifestations of Christian charity into the working of that general, benignant influence which the Gospel exerts in Christian countries over the opinions and conduct of entire communities. Its ideas and usages have a certain prevalence and authority with those who do not submit their hearts and lives to its spiritual and humbling doctrines and observances. It is to this secondary influence of Christianity that we must ascribe the great superiority of

evangelized nations in every department of morals and active virtue. Would we know what deeds of beneficence human nature will achieve or aspire to independent of divine revelation, we must look for examples to the history or actual condition of nations not enlightened by the Gospel. Whoever turns his inquiries in this direction will find that charity has no place in systems of pagan ethics. Sympathy with the sufferings and wants of humble life would scarcely have been ranked among the virtues by the sages of antiquity. Neither statesmen nor philosophers concerned themselves about the morals or comfort of the multitude. No patience or sagacity of antiquarian research has been able to discover among the ruins of Egypt or of Greece the remains of a hospital, or the site of an asylum for suffering humanity. The curious traveler who wanders among the surviving monuments of imperial Rome inquires in vain for some memorials of ancient mercy and philanthropy—for some spot or some chiseled fragment, consecrated to the veneration of posterity by some effort to elevate the intelligence and virtue, to increase the happiness, or diminish the woes of the teeming population that once fulfilled their earthly destiny amid these classic scenes. One vast structure, indeed, remains, almost entire, the most sumptuous and magnificent edifice that adorned the imperial city, built by one of the greatest and best of the emperors for the improvement and amusement of the people. It is the celebrated amphitheatre of Vespasian, in which ninety thousand citizens found their highest pleasure in seeing lions, tigers, and other ferocious beasts tear each other in pieces. More rarely, but still on all the more important holidays, they were indulged with the more exquisite luxury of beholding the shows of the gladiators, in which thousands of barbarous men, trained carefully for the purpose, and armed with deadly weapons, fought and slew each other for the amusement of the best men and most refined women of the metropolis of the world. We need not inquire after the chari-

ties of a people who found their chosen pastime in the contemplation of ferocious combats, ghastly wounds, and the convulsive throes and hideous groans of the dying. We may be sure that no careful provision was made for widows and orphans by a people who consigned the husband and the father to death for their amusement. These Romans, let it be remembered, were the most civilized and polished of the ancient nations. They were not impelled to deeds of cruelty, like the Hindoos and Aztecs, by gloomy superstition, but by their taste for elegant entertainments, and by sheer wantonness and contempt for humanity. This may be regarded an extreme case, but it shows what human nature is capable of, what it tends to, and what it has approached very nearly if not reached in every land left, in the absence of revelation, to the tender sympathies of our fallen race. There is nowhere any care for widows and orphans, for the poor and the suffering among the pagans. These regions are well styled by the Scriptures "habitations of cruelty;" and compared with them, nations the most faintly illuminated by the Gospel are exalted to heaven in all that relates to deeds of charity and beneficence. Wherever the Gospel has been promulgated, there a new era has been ushered in for the helpless and the suffering. It has been effectually preached *for* as well as to the poor. The ignorant, the destitute, the bereaved, the sick, the deaf, the blind, the insane have found relief in endowed institutions, and still more in the private unostentatious charity which Christianity has known how to call into action.

What is the secret influence by which the religion of Christ has achieved so great a triumph over human selfishness? which, through this parched and dreary wilderness where we make our pilgrimage, has opened bubbling fountains and planted green shades, where prostrate humanity may refresh itself, and find a new existence and a new joy?

The Gospel furnishes new and efficient motives to charity. It substitutes *the will of God* for sympathy.

Christianity plants itself at the foundation of all effective benevolence, by announcing to us the true character and destiny of the human being. Take man as we find him—a degraded, fallen, depraved creature, tainted with corruption, deformed with vices, tending to evil rather than to good, almost never rising in the scale of being, but rushing into the depths not merely of woe, but of depravity and the most hateful vices, as it were spontaneously—and I protest that there is nothing in him deserving to move our sympathies in his behalf. If we might be assured that the end of the career in which we see him hastening along to the tomb might be found in the tomb—if all that concerned him were to live and to die, we could hardly wait for the issue of such a career. We might grow impatient to see the earth cleared of so foul a blot. We might wonder that God preserved a being so long, who was so full of all the elements of evil. There is no room for charity. Man in that view is not worth caring for; but when the announcement is made that that degraded, corrupted, suffering, tainted wretch has a soul in him that is immortal; that his woes, that his vices shall likewise be as immortal as himself, unless there be interference for his rescue by those who have not fallen so low as he; then the wretch, the victim of a thousand vices, of a thousand most untoward circumstances, the disowned and oppressed for many generations rises up before us in the dignity of a wonderful manhood, and stands up the child of God—then it is that we see why we should labor for his amelioration; then we see why we are called upon, departing from our own pleasures, scorning the seduction of the world, spurning ease and social satisfactions, to plunge into the abyss in search of the lost; why we should dig deep for him, and should bring him up into broad daylight; should wash away his filth; should clothe him, bring him to his right mind, and plant new ideas in him; should mourn over his alienation from God; should bring him into the bosom of our sym-

pathies; should nurture him into life—into new life—the life of God; should seek to plant in him Christ, the true life; should wash him from his pollutions, chasing away his darkness, touching his heart, if we may, with human sympathy, preparing him to be a temple for the Holy Ghost to dwell in. Oh! it is worth while to labor for that man, for he never dies—to expend our strength and resources upon such an object—to build our efforts upon such a foundation, for what we do there shall live forever. That goodly fabric shall rear up its head and touch the clouds—it shall stand before the throne of God.

That one saying of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, "There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth," has done more for suffering humanity, more for the masses of guilty, perishing men in this world, than all the schemes of benevolence that have originated in any quarter. It has done more to reclaim the sufferer—more to purify and restore the guilty—more to wipe away the tears of the mourner—more to stay the oppressor's wrong—than every scheme of philosophy, than all systems of human ethics, than all benevolent plans of human government. Governments, philosophy, and systems of ethics have concerned themselves chiefly with communities; have been ambitious to enact good laws, and to rear up a mighty empire; but the units that compose the mass, the sufferers who lie in the foundations of a great people, the wretches who are out of sight in the days of show and parade—they were never the care of governments or philosophers.

Science and literature have never been ambitious to pour their light into these dark minds, but Christ recognized in every sufferer an immortal spirit, and fastened his regards upon him. The Gospel *individualizes*. It passes into the multitude. It counts how many immortal souls there are. It is able to discern the true element of greatness, and goodness, and hopefulness that there is in each individual. The

divine compassion takes hold of the immortal element—seeks to rescue the man, not chiefly because he does not in his low estate contribute much to the honor and well-being of his country—because his darkened intellect is not fruitful in good counsel—because his depraved appetites and manners are not fit for polished society—but because the taint of sin has seized upon his spirit; because he who was made for eternal life and for union with God has sunk into the depths from which the divine interposition must raise him before he is fit for so high a position.

The Gospel estimates the value, the dignity of each immortal intelligence, not from adventitious circumstances of wealth, parentage, position, accomplishments, but by the image of God which he bears, however dimmed or defaced. In all his degradation, and wretchedness, and guilt, the outcast of men is still a child of God, formed for purposes the most beneficent and divine. Whatever the complexion his character or destiny may assume, they are to be immortal. This ineffaceable characteristic is what attracts and rivets to the frailest human being the compassionate regards of God. This is the true secret of so much fostering care, of so much patient forbearance with ingratitude and sin, of the earnest incessant appeals and invitations with which the sinner is so warmly plied by Heaven. Now the Christian philanthropist has learned to look out upon the fallen race of man from the same stand-point. He sees all men through the eyes of the divine compassion, and, seen from such a position, the human being, no matter what may be his social position or his intellectual attainments, becomes invested with a deep, enduring interest. The beggar, the profligate, the infant of days, the slave, the savage, has a soul in him, to which all that is benignant and godlike in human sympathy attaches itself. Henceforward, nothing is esteemed indifferent or unimportant which may affect his condition and welfare. These candidates for heaven or hell may no longer be neg-

lected by any who have entered into the designs of the divine mercy. They must be instructed and guided. They must be reclaimed from vice. They must be won by kindness, and confirmed in well-doing by diligent nurture. They want the example of the virtuous, and the fostering communion of cultivated minds and loving hearts to imbue them with pure sentiments and aspirations, and to give them some new taste for things lovely, and honest, and of good report. It will not do, therefore, to abandon them to vulgar and demoralizing associations—to leave them to want, and rags, and the poor-house. It will harden their hearts. It will deprave their principles. It diminishes the hope of their becoming pious and winning heaven. God cares for them, and so must we, if we aspire to be called his children or his friends—if we would not offend him by slighting his image in man.

The concern which a true Christian learns to feel for the salvation of the poor, and unfortunate, and degraded, involves and bears with it a lively solicitude for all minor interests. The greater comprehends the less, and can not exist without insuring attention to all the minute charities. You can not abandon an immortal being, for whom Christ died, to the evils of orphanage, and ignorance, and want, and corrupting vices, so long as any care is felt for his salvation. Such neglect becomes a chief obstacle in the way of all religious inculcations, for it closes the heart against him who bears the invitations of the divine mercy. Christ was a healer as well as a Savior, and his beneficent ministry to human woes and wants usually preceded and ushered in his saving message to the soul.

The Gospel fosters the spirit of charity by revealing the true relation of man to man. It settles for us the pregnant questions, "Am I my brother's keeper?" "Who is my neighbor?"

There is a strong tendency in human society, and espe-

cially in high civilization, to separate the rich and the poor, and array them in distinct and sharply-defined classes. They form separate social circles. The foundation of enduring differences is laid in the schools where they are educated, in their topics of conversation, in their amusements, and in their consequent tastes. These and other circumstances, too numerous to mention, are so many elements of repulsion, which perpetually tend to increase the distance and multiply the peculiarities of the two great classes. The intelligent, and refined, and fashionable, are attracted toward each other by similarity of tastes and objects; while those less favorably endowed with such advantages shrink away from so much splendor, or pride, or fastidiousness, into associations more congenial from habit and inclination, or less mortifying by contrast. Thus every thing tends to separate the rich and the poor, the favorites and the victims of fortune, the natural dispensers and the natural recipients of charity. As this distance increases, and intercourse is diminished, sympathy becomes less powerful; for contiguity, and even contact, is an indispensable condition to its free, spontaneous action. A state of things less favorable to expansive benevolence could not be imagined. Shut up, each party to communion with their own ideas, interests, and associations, the rich are likely to grow more proud, luxurious, and hard-hearted; the poor more and more suspicious and envious, till the alienation of sympathy and affection becomes complete.

I do not know where we are to find a remedy—I know not if, even with the resources which the Gospel affords us, a remedy can be found—if this tendency must not continue with our progress in the arts and refinements of life—if it must not go on to increase and gain strength perpetually. It seems to be a species of doom, the fulfillment of a destiny. It affords him who takes large views of human society—all who have hearts to feel for the wants and sufferings of their fellow-creatures—apprehension that, in spite of what Chris-

tianity has been able to do, the evil will go on, and gain strength from day to day. Certain it is, that it is in some sort recognized and sanctified by Christianity itself—Christianity, at least, as it prevails among us. Not only are the lovers of pleasure withdrawing themselves from under the recognized dominion of the Gospel, and removing farther and farther from a proper position for the exercise of beneficence, and the performance of their social and humane duties, but the Church itself has admitted the evil into its own bosom. The sons and daughters of pleasure and high life hardly stand farther aloof from the poor and unevangelized than do Christians, favored especially of God with the means of doing good, from their brethren in the Redeemer. Who does not know—who will think it worth while to conceal the fact—that the tendency is to separate the refined (I speak of Christians now)—the refined, the elevated, the influential, the rich, from the poor, the dependant, the ignorant—those who can give help from those who most need help? Who does not see in the stately structures rising up around us—who does not see in the very beauty of their proportions, in the costliness of their architecture, in the sumptuous drapery and decorations within, so many barriers against any poor man or woman's entering into their doors? Who does not see that, besides all other sects that disfigure the Church, and rend the seamless garment of Christ, there is still another sect arising, more uncompromising, and more unyielding, with less heart to feel, farther away from any remedial influence of Christianity—another sect, the natural, perhaps the inevitable result of our growing civilization?

God knows the time has already come when many who command the largest resources for doing good, if they choose to do it, have bravely withdrawn themselves from their own flesh and brethren in Christ, and have provided for themselves and their families religious ministrations so costly as to be utterly denied to the multitude; leaving them with

their poverty, if they are poor; with their ignorance, as far as they are ignorant, to get on as they can—to rear and support their own churches, and to establish schools for their own children. Now Christianity, if it has not been able to prevent such evils, stands in its high office, and, in the name of God the Father, pours forth anathemas upon them. It spurns such sectarianism. It hates this withdrawing ourselves from our own flesh and blood; and, if it were not for Christianity, none can conjecture where this evil would find any stay or limitation. No man can guess what shall be the result upon our social condition—upon the prospects of human society among us—upon our great cities—upon the race of mankind; what shall be the result of this withdrawing of those who are naturally the lights and pillars of the Church—of thus separating the leaders of the people from the people, who are left without a leader—of this congealing of sympathy, which ought to be poured forth every where—of this engrossment of means, making it so costly a thing to worship God, that none but a rich man can do it satisfactorily and creditably.

Religion has done much; it has more to do; and, if it were not for the voice that comes down from its high places—if it were not that Heaven now and then breaks out with utterances, wretched would be the condition of the world—more wretched than now, when so many are well-nigh scornfully excluded from Christian temples. God's word rebukes and shames this narrow, cruel exclusiveness. It abominates caste. Not the congenial saint or the congenial Pharisee, who goes to *our* house of prayer, and harmonizes with our orthodoxy, is to be the sole beneficiary of our compassion or our alms-deeds. According to Christ's genealogy, the despised heretic Samaritan was near neighbor and full brother to the orthodox Jew. "Pure religion and undefiled," overleaping the narrow boundaries of circle and sect, goes forth in quest of the objects of charity in the highways

and hedges. It looks after the greatest sufferers. It goes for the lost sheep into the wilderness far away. No password is demanded at the door of its heart. To be unfortunate, and to bear the image of God, gives precedence over all other claims in the eyes of that charity which has been learned in the school of Christ.

We may trust that as Christianity prevails, as the Holy Spirit is poured out, when we get more religion and love the Lord better—when we truly give ourselves to the Lord, and practice our duties in accordance with the will of God, some antidote may be found for this gigantic evil, for this incubus on the Church, this strange graft on our poor, humble, loving, poverty-honoring Christianity.

Still more effectually has Christianity provided for the needy, in the terrific announcement it makes to every man that he is not, in the sight of God, the owner of what he possesses, but only a trustee, a steward, held by-and-by to a stern reckoning for his administration of the trust. It admits and defends his ownership in regard to all other men. Religion is no agrarian—no leveler. It holds sacred the rich man's rights. It forbids the most needy beggar to desire, much more to disturb his possessions. I think the true spirit of Christianity would have us to respect and honor the man whom God has deemed worthy of such a trust. But while the rich man is hedged around by so many safeguards and guarantees against all human interference, he is held to a most urgent and startling accountability to Heaven. This is a trite, common truth—every body knows it; but yet it is a truth that may, if any in the Bible will make men listen and tremble, be relied upon for the performance of that office.

It is all the same whether he have one talent, or three, or five, or ten. Not a farthing is his to squander upon his lusts, not a farthing to hoard to the endamagement of any one of the sons of men. The principle is all God's—the in-

crease is his. Upon every dollar of his accumulation, in whatever protean form it finds investment, are enstamped the image and superscription of Jehovah. Over every door of entrance to his sumptuous mansion—on the decorated walls of his gay saloons, is broadly inscribed, as with the hand of a man, "Not thine, but God's." The dainty viands that oppress his table have a voice that pleads eloquently for the poor; and that sentence from the pen of inspiration, "clothe the naked," may be read by the eye of faith, embroidered upon all his graceful drapery and precious garments. O! it is not a light thing to be intrusted with riches—to be the steward of an impartial, omnipresent, inexorably just God. Well did our Savior exclaim, "How hardly shall a rich man enter into the kingdom of heaven!" Methinks he might also have said, how honorably, how triumphantly shall he get there, how abundant the entrance that shall be administered to him—amid what applauses, what blessings shall he rise to his last resting-place, provided only he has grace to consecrate his all to Christ, and make friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, who shall be ready, when he fails below, to receive him into everlasting habitations. Let him fully comprehend his mission; let him look out from the elevation on which the blessing of divine Providence has placed him, and see what good may be achieved, what miseries alleviated, what light diffused, what institutions may be established or sustained, to purify, to raise up, to illuminate, to comfort our depraved, degraded, dark, and suffering race; and I know not who may sow so abundantly for a glorious harvest. He may make such an outlay of his earthly treasure as shall produce to him in this world a hundred-fold more of satisfaction than the greatest wealth, selfishly spent or hoarded, can yield its proprietor, and "in the world to come life everlasting." But we must add, our Savior thought it was needful to announce that the rich man—opulent, but not charitable; ever gathering, but not scattering abroad—

the rich man, trusting in his riches, but putting no trust in God's law, shall *hardly* enter into the kingdom. It is a most responsible function, that of acting as God's almoner in this populous, perishing, poverty-stricken world. It is no sinecure, for it is required of stewards that a man be found faithful. To whom much is given, of him much shall be required. This oppressive responsibility no considerate man, chiefly intent on saving his soul, would much covet, though a good man may rejoice with trembling at the honor done him, in being made the depositary of so high and fruitful a trust. That the responsibility is not too stringent, we have good proof in the fact that the beneficent results are not, after all, over-plenteous. Yet we must admit that, in this great divine law, which holds every man accountable to God for the use he makes of every dollar, is a main resource and dependence for the world's distresses. The claims of charity are laid even now, and under the divinest sanctions, not literally at the rich man's gate, but at the door of his conscience. There are few who can always pass by on the other side. It must sometimes be felt that God is a spectator in this business. The connection between such a trust and the judgment-seat of Christ is not so shadowy and remote that man can continue always to overlook it. Here, then, is the storehouse and strong-hold of charity. As long as the land prospers, and either the Church or the world retains some fear of God, the streams of beneficence shall never become dry. In proportion as pure religion flourishes will the revenues of charity be multiplied from the same sources.

To every sincere Christian, the Gospel offers another motive to charity more powerful than the one just discussed, or any other addressed merely to his sense of religious or social obligation. Our adorable Savior has been pleased to inculcate this virtue with an emphasis and repetition quite unexampled in the New Testament. While he offers salvation to all in the Gospel which he came to promulgate on earth, he sig-

nalizes with special favor the exercise of benevolence toward the ignorant, the poor, the down-trodden. He provides for all. The great ones of the earth have nothing to fear from him if they do their duty, but they whom he most cares for are the poor. The favorites of this genial system of mercy and of eternal love are the poor.

A cup of cold water, given in the right spirit, is promised a heavenly reward. "To visit the widow and the fatherless, and to live unspotted from the world," is a comprehensive formula that contains the sum and substance of pure religion. As the essential means of cultivating virtues of such transcendent excellence, Jesus did not threaten, but he promised his disciples, as an unfailing privilege, that the poor they should always have with them. Finally, the decisions of the last day are to turn upon the question of our practical benevolence. To have ministered to the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, and the prisoner, will be the righteous man's passport into the abodes of bliss, while the want of such virtue will constitute the ground of condemnation to the lost. In reckoning with his people, Christ assumes the poor man's obligations, and acknowledges every benefaction as conferred upon himself. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." He substitutes himself in the poor man's place. He regards himself as the beneficiary, and thus calls upon each true disciple to dispense his charities with such a grateful liberality and cordial good will as might actuate him, if it were made possible for him, to bestow some boon upon the crucified Redeemer himself. Thus is the most powerful motive known to the Christian economy enlisted on the side of charity; and Christ calls upon every sincere, loyal disciple to engage in doing good to the poor, by all their love and obligation to his own person and cause. In this all-powerful motive is found an ample remedy for the insufficiency of other motives. Strong sympathy with human wants is a rare endowment,

but gratitude to Christ pervades and warms all Christian hearts. Not to love and to be thankful is to be no Christian at all. Pity for the poor acts feebly and uncertainly. This sympathy with Christ, the true beneficiary, in the view of the Gospel, is the controlling sentiment of all pious hearts, and that at all times. Mere natural sympathy is repelled and disgusted by the insensibility, and ingratitude, and debasement of the beneficiary; but upon this new and higher ground of action we have nothing to do with these, but our outlay of charity is to be proportioned to Christ's worthiness and our obligations to him. Here, too, we find a motive potent enough to overawe selfishness. This, we have seen, is commonly too strong for mere sympathy, which it fairly worries out of its enterprises. But love to Christ is stronger than even this master passion, which it overrules and gradually undermines in all regenerate souls.

Charity conducted on this evangelical principle becomes, not only a duty, but a privilege and discipline, adapted to all Christians, not to a few of special temperament and large means. All are under the same obligation to render the homage of duty and thankfulness to the adorable Savior, and all, the poor perhaps equally with the rich, need the moral culture imparted by the practice of active, habitual charity. The man who has a hundred dollars a year, no less than he who has one or ten thousand, is in danger of loving his money too well, and of falling into the deadly sin of covetousness. Hence the wisdom and necessity of the Christian maxim which enjoins upon all the duty of making material sacrifices for Christ's sake. This is the only revealed method of counteracting and mortifying that spirit of selfishness so fatal to piety. The love of God and the love of the world, Christ and covetousness, are antagonists that perpetually struggle for the mastery in the soul of even many believers, and the poor, no less than the rich man, is called upon, "according to what he hath," to engage in a sphere of activities so em-

inently pleasing to the Savior, and so peculiarly and specifically adapted to impart a wholesome and indispensable moral discipline. The spirited and grateful participation of the poor disciples in this contribution for the churches of Judea called forth the special commendation of the apostle. He bore them honorable testimony that, "to their power, and even beyond their power," they were eager to make their free-will offerings. It was a proof of the sincerity of their love to "the Lord Jesus Christ, who though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich."

To offer such a proof, and such a grateful testimony to the Lord who bought him, is an instinctive desire, strong and active in proportion to his piety, in the bosom of every true Christian. Deeply conscious of unworthiness and guilt, and overwhelmed with a sense of the Savior's infinite compassion, the regenerate man pants for opportunities to signalize his gratitude and devotion to a benefactor above want and above requitals, but still graciously mindful of every token of thankfulness and affection. He longs to give some meet expression to a sentiment so profound and controlling. He covets some field of toil, or endurance, or sacrifice, adapted to the manifestation of loyalty and love. It was in this spirit that the penitent, pardoned Magdalen poured out her costly ointment upon her Master's feet; and that Paul, not satisfied with the labors, and sufferings, and successes of his wonderful career, burned, if Christ would so permit, even to be conformed to the likeness of his painful, shameful death. None was farther than he from imagining that there was merit in such exhibitions of his Christian sincerity; but it seemed to him good to give vent to his grateful emotions, to offer disinterested testimony, in the sight of heaven and earth, to the irrepressible power of grace. Something of this spirit every true disciple, in his better moods at least, is conscious of feeling; and in proportion to the elevation and purity of his piety will

be the depth and efficiency of the emotion. Holy and beneficent action, flowing from this motive, constitutes the highest development of evangelical piety, and the only evidence we can give to the world that our religion is not spurious and hypocritical. "By their fruits ye shall know them."

Having made this consecration of ourselves "to the Lord, by the will of God," it would be profitable for us to inquire for a moment in what enterprises we should be led to engage, and with what spirit we should prosecute them.

If this Christian experience were fully realized, and this sacrifice fully made at the onset—if we have "given our own selves to the Lord," and work in our new vocation according to the will of God, what services, think you, will stand highest in the approbation of Heaven—what enterprises be dearest to the heart of our Lord Jesus Christ? Where may we do good in order to bring the highest, strongest tide of satisfaction into that bosom of all mercy and com n, where we look for our own salvation.

Doing good, in all its forms, is undoubtedly enjoined upon us by the holy Scriptures; it requires, however, in many human enterprises, no slight measure of human discretion to be sure that we make such an outlay of means as shall do most for our fellow-creatures, and most for the removal of the evils of the world. We may so bestow upon the poor as shall positively increase their wretchedness, by giving countenance to indolence; we may so bestow as shall tend to strengthen vicious appetites, by affording the means of indulging them. It is a great question with political economists, whether it would not be better, on the whole, if the streams of benevolence and wealth were less affluent; if, in civilized communities, men were left more to rely on themselves. Without attempting to settle this question, one thing we know, that if we are consecrated fully to God, and are seeking to perform our duty in accordance with his will, then those enterprises which he has specifically sanctioned, which he most patron-

izes, for which he has done most, for which he has made the largest sacrifices himself, are such as will secure the largest share of his approbation. Would we know how we may best please the Savior? I think we should not be liable to mistake if the propagation of his own Gospel, and seeking the salvation of immortal souls, for which he shed his own blood, were adopted by us, and cherished as our own special enterprise and interest. Recollect it was to save souls, to diffuse the Gospel, to establish the recovering economy which the Lord Jesus instituted, that the Savior died, that he lived, that he preached, that he went about doing good, that he organized a Church, that he has cherished and sustained it through all the ages of its history, and you will be free from all doubt, that by co-operating with him in that enterprise, and by laboring to save souls, whether among yourselves or in the ends of the earth, you will do your duty as Christians, that you will make the very best outlay of such means as God has intrusted you with for doing good.

Oh! that we might be enabled to engage in this enterprise, as well as in other duties of our holy religion, under the operation of the motive that our text suggests. If we were pious, if the Church were thoroughly converted and renovated, if it might be said of those who bear the name of Jesus, that they give their own selves to the Lord—if it might be affirmed of us, in our various fields of labor, that we are working by the will of God, making that our rule, to the supplanting of ordinary selfishness, I know not what goodly revolution would dawn upon the Church and upon the world. I suppose it would come to pass, that instead of the stinted sacrifices with which, it seems to me, we sometimes dishonor God, men would be careful to do all they might for the promotion of the cause of religion. You would see them coming forward, and, as freely as they now give dollars, would they then give fortunes for the glory of Christ. As laboriously as they now strive to get rich, and provide for

their families here on earth, would you see men toiling, plying every art and every trade, in order to attain something which they might pour into the treasury of the Lord.

Oh! we are fearfully behind the spirit of our holy religion in our conceptions of its duties. If one could rise above the frosty atmosphere in which our spirits are wont to live and breathe, if we could shake off these traditionary sentiments that clog us and impede our movements, what should we think about the work of saving souls? Do you suppose that the world, the flesh, and the devil, would be able to blind us so egregiously that we could not see mighty processions, peoples, kindreds, nations, passing on in an unbroken career into ruin? Oh! our faith must be something else than what it now is. The word of God, as offering the preparation for eternal life, is the only means of rescuing an immortal soul from death. Our faith must take these things in, as meaning something. We must not bring ourselves into such an interpretation of them as to crush, and press out, and send to the winds, all their precious meaning, all their power to move our consciences and our hearts.

Brethren, do we believe this word of God? Are we giving ourselves to the Lord? Are we doing this missionary work in the spirit of our text? I speak now no more of the general subject of benevolence; but in the application of it I confine myself to the special object of this morning.

Do we believe what the Bible says on this subject as we believe its other announcements? Do we believe that there are three hundred millions of men, women and children in China, of whom not one hundred thousand have ever heard of the Gospel, or of Christ as a Savior; and that they who have heard, care no more for him than they do for one of their dead idols; that they live without one contrite emotion, without a tear, without smiting on the breast even once, or ever crying "God be merciful to me a sinner?" Do we believe that these three hundred millions are passing like

a vast, uncounted, countless army to the bar of God? Is there any interposition to be hoped for beyond the present world? Shall terms of mercy be offered them after they die? Are, then, threescore years and ten the only age, the only time, the only eternity in which to labor for their salvation? If you estimate it according to the interests that it embodies; if you believe that this is the period in which their salvation must be secured or that they must be damned; and if you don't believe it, what do you believe—having given yourselves to the Lord, having agreed, from your covenant relations with him, to take his word for your guide, to take these things as he has revealed them? Oh! if we occupy this Christian position, what are we about? Have we hearts, and can we feel? or are we of them who "have eyes and see not—who have ears and hear not." Is it in vain that the declarations of eternal truth in regard to the inevitable curse that must press upon the nations which know not God has been spoken in our ears? Has it been a mistake in Christ, that these nations, these Churches, these Christians, this people, have been chosen to be the depositories of a truth pregnant with eternal results, to be the keepers of a light that must illuminate the nations, or they must perish in unutterable woe? Has he made a mistake? Are we his chosen vessels? Are we the men and women whom he has had in his eye, whom he has commanded to carry out and to send forth this saving message? Then, I ask, what are we doing? Oh! if we had the spirit of our Savior, if his law were our rule, what efforts would be made, what liberality displayed on the part of those who possess any thing of this world's treasure! How should we deny ourselves to save something to give to save souls? How should we labor intensely at the work, as far as providential circumstances would allow, that we might achieve the means of sending the Gospel to those who perish for lack of it? Dear brethren, I leave the subject before you. I check my-

self. I restrain the tides of feeling that press upon my soul. I know too well where I am. I take thought of the age in which we live. Others much more able than I have pleaded for dying souls, and they pleaded in vain. We may not ask too much. We must wait; we must pray for the Holy Spirit to be more abundantly showered down upon us; we must look for sanctifying influences to come in, to regenerate and rouse up the Church; we must pray for the power of God, that we may see afar off, and take in the great idea of Christianity. We want faith; we want to believe in Jesus. As yet we but partially believe all his word—every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God; who of us believes it—fully believes that man can not be saved without the blood of Christ? who believes that he can not hear without a preacher? who that none can preach except he be sent? I mean, who practically believes it, as in the light of the Judgment Day?

God grant that we may open our eyes—that we may hear his words and receive them into our hearts; that the enterprise which now appeals to us, and every effort which proposes to give the Gospel to the perishing, for whom the Redeemer died; that every such enterprise may become dear to the Church, may be gladly welcomed whenever its cause is presented, and that each one of us may come forward with our offering to testify our gratitude to Christ, and our sympathy for the souls for whom he died.

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VI.

ON MIRACLES.

If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin, but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.—JOHN, xv., 24.

THIS text sets forth very clearly the true intent and object of our Savior's miracles. They were not wrought to demonstrate the truth and reasonableness of his doctrines. These were commonly apparent from internal evidence. The announcements of the Sermon on the Mount—the great commandments, "Thou shalt love the Lord, &c., and thy neighbor as thyself"—the divine rule of "doing unto others as we would have them do unto us"—carry with them to the human mind all necessary evidence, and they produce conviction independent of all argument. But evidence is not always authority, and the mind of man may be fully satisfied in regard to the truth and excellency of a doctrine or a system, without feeling the slightest obligation to reduce it to practice. Should a learned and eloquent jurist go forth through the length and breadth of the land, promulgating salutary legal principles, whoever might be constrained to believe and admire, none would feel obliged to obey without the clearest proof that the doctrines inculcated had been adopted by the Legislature as the laws of the land. Men would wish to know that the gifted lecturer was also a duly-authorized judge before they could listen to his teachings as any thing better than clever theories, which they were at liberty to receive or discard, as their habits, or tastes, or prejudices might incline them. A very respectable moral code might have been formed out of the books of mere philosophers, before the advent of the Redeemer, but their precepts were not author-

itative. They were not law, much less were they religion; and they were consequently utterly deficient in all the sanctions which could give them power over the conscience and the life. Not so after they had been adopted by Christ. "He spake as never man spake," whether philosopher, scribe, or Pharisee, for he "did the works which none other man did." He wrought miracles which were the pledges and proofs of his divine mission, and thenceforward they who refused obedience to his words were guilty of sinning against God. They "hated both the Son and the Father."

These remarks expose the weakness of a common infidel objection, that, in the essential features of His moral code, Christ had been anticipated by the philosophers. This is only true in part, and it is of no force as an argument against Christianity, which alone gives to moral precepts, whether new or old, their power over the conscience. They also make manifest the intent and object of our Savior's miracles, which is my special topic of discourse on this occasion.

It has often been said, and I think with the strictest truth, that there is no conceivable way by which God could have given his sanction to the Gospel as the divine method of saving and governing the world except by miracles. I can conceive of two, and only two, *possible* methods of imparting such a sanction to our holy religion. God might have revealed its doctrines to each individual mind, accompanied by the sure conviction of its divine origin and obligations. Such a revelation would itself be a miracle, since it would plainly be a divine act, and an interference with the laws of our nature. It would not, however, be *such* a miracle as those by which Christ attested his authority as a divine teacher, nor would it be adapted to that end. Unquestionably God is able to endow all minds with the doctrines and the dispositions of the Gospel by direct inspiration. He is able to make us wise, and pure, and happy, by his own sovereign act; but he chooses to deal with us as free moral agents, and so has

preferred a method of acting upon us under which our piety, and virtue, and faith, shall be voluntary and progressive, and dependent ultimately on our own persevering, earnest efforts. With this plan of saving sinners, the theory I have supposed —that which should communicate religious convictions and graces to individual minds by direct inspiration—would be plainly incompatible. It would do violence to our free agency, which religion always respects.

Besides this direct inspiration, which is not suited to the constitution of man, there was no other way, so far as we can perceive, of giving the divine sanction to Christianity, but the one actually adopted. The first teachers of the new religion performed miracles—gave manifestations of the divine power —to show that their mission was from God. This evidence was addressed to the external senses; and while it was sufficient to convince the understanding and bind the conscience, it left the will free, and every individual conformed his conduct to his convictions or not, as he pleased. The miracle was always a demonstration that the lesson inculcated was from God, and, of course, that it was the duty of man to give heed to it. Disobedience was clearly both presumptuous and sinful under such a manifestation; but man might choose to sin, to show forth the enmity of his heart, to show that he "hated both the Son and the Father." The evidence was clear and convincing, and the guilt of rejecting it was manifest and enormous in the same degree. The willing and obedient walked by a shining light, while they who closed their eyes in voluntary, obstinate blindness, incurred the greater condemnation. In this precise position does the great Teacher present the rejecter of his Gospel in our text. This rejection of Christ was *the sin*, by eminence, in comparison with which all others were unworthy to be named, and its enormity and guilt were great in proportion to the convincing proofs which the miracles of Christ had afforded of his divine character and mission.

When, from the position which we now occupy, we look back upon the conduct of these unbelieving Jews, we are filled with astonishment at their obstinate rejection of the Savior. We wonder how, in the light of so convincing a demonstration, they could remain unconvinced; or how, with convictions which, it seems to us, must have been irresistible, they should have "hated" and crucified the Son of God. Along with this general sentiment of blame, this verdict of condemnation, in which irreligious men freely join, I think there is often mingled a feeling of self-approbation that we have never sinned against a light so convincing, and of regret and complaint that the Gospel has not come down to us still clothed with its miraculous attributes. The rich man, even after some experience of the realities of eternity, is represented as still attaching undue importance to supernatural manifestations. "If one went unto them from the dead, they will repent." This is a natural, though a little reflection will convince us, not a reasonable objection to the Gospel.

Why did miracles cease with the ministry of the apostles? I answer, They had fulfilled their office in attesting the divinity of the Gospel, and, from their nature, they could not be perpetuated in the Church. A miracle is an interference with the common laws and operations of nature. Any one of those operations is as much a manifestation of the divine power as a miracle; but it is no miracle, because of its frequent and uniform occurrence. Take a marble and an acorn, and deposit both in the earth. Antecedent to experience, there is just as much probability that the first will germinate and produce a tree as the second; but, because acorns usually grow, we look upon the phenomenon without surprise. Should the marble germinate, we should regard it a miracle, an interposition of God. If, however, we had uniformly or usually observed marbles to grow when planted, we should feel no surprise, but should conclude it to be their nature,

and should throw off the mystery by pronouncing them vegetables. Yet there would really be the same evidence of divine power in the one case as the other, in the germinating acorn as in the germinating marble; while the latter would be a miracle because it deviated from the known laws of nature, and the former no miracle because it conformed to them. A miracle, then, ceases to be such by frequent repetition; that is, it loses all its power to produce, on the common mind, conviction of God's presence and agency. Let us suppose, now, that instead of withdrawing the miraculous gifts of the apostles, it had pleased God that they should be a perpetual endowment of all ministers of the Gospel. It is plain that unlimited power to interfere with the laws of nature could not have been safely intrusted to such a multitude of men of various degrees of wisdom and forethought. The power must have been special not to be dangerous. It must have extended to the performance and repetition of one or a few miracles, whenever the exigencies of the Gospel and the Church demanded such high testimony to the divine authority of religion and its ministers. Suppose power to work a single miracle had been conceded to all ministers of the Gospel, and that that miracle had been the healing of the sick by anointing them with oil, or the curing of blindness by spittle and clay. It is perfectly obvious that these operations would have lost their miraculous character by repetition; for it is no more wonderful that a sick man should be healed by the application of oil, than by any other external or internal application. This miracle, therefore, would soon be regarded as nothing more than an efficacious prescription. Its reputation as a miracle would soon be merged in its reputation as a medicine, differing from other medicines only in this, that it was administered by clergymen who had contrived to monopolize the secret of preparing and applying this sovereign panacea. Suppose the standing miracle had been the power of multiplying bread, as our

Savior did in his day. How long would the skeptical world have been in discovering that this was no more than a natural process — that the atmosphere is full of the invisible material of bread, which spontaneously attaches itself to the mass in the hands of the priest, when compounded in a certain way and broken at a certain angle, of which the clergy have contrived to learn and keep the secret? Any other example would do just as well. A miracle ceases to be such by repetition. A single manifestation of divine power is miraculous; but, no sooner does it become frequent, than the idea of God's agency is excluded, and all is ascribed to the efficacy of the laws of nature. The ascent of Elijah through mid air was a miracle, while the detention on the face of the earth of all the millions of our race is familiarly ascribed to the cause of gravitation, which is itself but the constant exertion of that divine power, of which the miracle was but a single, transient manifestation.

Miracles, then, from their nature, could not be perpetuated in the Church. We may add, their object was achieved, and their perpetuation was unnecessary. Our faith, at this moment, derives all the support from miracles that their familiar repetition before our eyes could impart. Evidence addressed to the senses affects the imagination, but not the understanding, more than that received by testimony. We as fully believe what is reported to us by competent and trustworthy witnesses, as we do what we see with our own eyes; and the lapse of years, whether many or few, can not impair the strength of this belief. More than seventy years have elapsed since our independence was declared. None of us were present, none of us were eye or ear-witnesses, and yet not one of us has a doubt on the subject. Why do we believe? We heard it from our fathers. We read it in history. We enjoy, and share, and maintain the institutions consequent on that fact. If our successors, a hundred or a thousand years hence, should have the same evidence of our

national origin, will that evidence have lost any part of its force because of the period that shall have intervened? Will any man doubt of the existence of Washington, and Hancock, and Franklin, and of the parts they acted in the Revolution? Apply this illustration to Christianity. Christ preached the Gospel, and confirmed it by miracles. The apostles and first preachers did the same, and they wrote a history of the rise and establishment of the new religion, which has come down to us accompanied by all possible tokens of authenticity. On the strength of this testimony the civilized world adopted the Gospel, and this history of Christ and his miracles. This was done when the apostles were yet alive, and when it would have been easy to expose their pretensions, if unfounded. The only proper question here is, had the first Christians good ground for believing the Gospel? They heard the apostles. They sifted their pretensions. They saw their miracles, or heard of them through original witnesses, and they were convinced, and embraced the new religion, often at the peril and loss of property and life. Could they have been deceived? Were they right in believing? Then so are we. We have the same evidence, the same doctrines, the same history, the same institutions. An hundred years, a thousand, eighteen hundred years, do not affect the question in the least. On the contrary, they strengthen the evidence, for we have all the proof possessed by the first Christians, and all that the history of Christianity has since developed.

There is certainly a difference between the effect of miraculous evidence, as it addressed itself to the eyes and ears of the Jews, and as it reaches us through the testimony of the Bible and the Church. The presence of the Son of God on earth, and his personal ministry, were stupendous facts, well calculated to excite curiosity and arrest attention; but these were only incidental accompaniments of the Gospel, which added nothing to its credibility and authority, or to its bind-

ing force upon the conscience. Should we admit that the attendants on our Lord's ministry, or that of his apostles, possessed in these extraneous circumstances some degree of advantage over us, we may yet affirm that the men of the present age enjoy facilities to faith unknown to the first disciples. These are referred to by our Lord in the verses that succeed the text. "The Comforter—the Spirit of truth—shall testify of me," and "Ye also shall bear witness." The testimony of the Holy Ghost and the testimony of Christians constitute, under the economy of the Gospel, the living commentary through which every word that has proceeded out of the mouth of God is reiterated with divine authority, and every miracle of Jesus is re-enacted before the sinner's conscience in all its pristine splendor. "The Comforter," said the blessed Jesus, when about to depart to his own glory, "shall convince the world of sin—because they believe not in me." This was the object of miracles. They testified in their day of the divine authority of him who spoke from heaven, and no sin was so great as that of unbelief after such a demonstration. Now the Spirit takes of the things of God, and shows them to the sinner's conscience. He testifies of Christ—of his divine authority—of the truth and excellency of his words and his miracles. The words of Christ were uttered, for the most part, in the ear of his disciples; his works were seen by only a few of the Jews. Both are now taken up by the Spirit and brought near to all consciences. Christ was a man straitened by the voluntary restrictions of his incarnation, confining his labors to one people. The Holy Ghost broods over the universal conscience of man—shines into all hearts—preaches in all gospel sermons—walks with the soul by the way—has ever a word of warning for the impenitent, and of comfort for the believer. In point of fact, this agency of the Holy Ghost is the most general, the most efficient, the most benignant, and the most awful of any which the divine wisdom employs for our salvation;

and, though unseen, and acting in a sphere above our senses, it makes itself manifest in its appointed way to all men. So far as the unconverted are concerned, its great work is that of convincing of sin, because they believe not in Christ. It will not allow the sinner wholly to forget him that died on the cross, and it impresses upon his soul the undying conviction of his guilt in rejecting him who did such mighty works. The reproduction of all the miracles of Christ could not better vindicate his divine authority, nor all the fires and thunders of "the mount that burneth" awaken so keen a sense of the guilt of unbelief as the still small voice of him who testifies for God to the individual conscience.

This general conviction for the sin of unbelief and impiety wrought by the Spirit of God in all minds within the sphere of Christian influences, is heightened by the testimony of the pious. "Ye also shall bear witness." We are to "hold forth the word of life," to "let our light shine;" and there can be no doubt that the holy lives of the godly are among the most effective arguments known to our Christian economy. The confession of the Church—its declarations of God's truth, and love, and faithfulness, and power to save—are also mighty and chosen means for producing and heightening that general conviction of the claims of religion and the sin of neglecting it, which constitutes so important an element in Christian agencies. These are direct testimonies, not to the miracles wrought eighteen hundred years ago, but to the miracles of grace performed by the ever-living Savior in the souls of his people, to-day and always, when and where a willing mind can be found. Such free declarations of God's goodness and in-working power, when accompanied by a consistent life, a fervent zeal, a heavenly spirit, a melting, overflowing sympathy for the impenitent, and an active, self-sacrificing love and loyalty for Christ and his cause possess, and are designed to possess, almost irresistible power over the souls of men.

The agencies I have enumerated actually accomplish all that Christ's miracles ever did accomplish. They do not convert sinners. They do not compel them to repent, but they do convince them of their sins and of their duty. They arouse the conscience and array it on the side of God. They extort inaudible confessions of deep guilt and ill-desert for not having believed in a crucified Savior.

If the considerations I have adduced shall seem to any to fall short of sustaining the declaration I have ventured to make, that the accumulated argument for religion is no less conclusive than the Savior's miracles, I only need to advert to the result. Did miracles actually accomplish more than the present agencies of the Gospel? So far from it, the great body of the Jews, among whom the Savior wrought his mighty works, wickedly rejected him; and Bethsaida and Chorazin, after witnessing miracles enough to have led Sodom and Nineveh to repentance, still continued impenitent. The truth is simply this: the ministry and miracles of Christ produced the same effect on the Jews as the agencies of the Gospel now exert upon the multitude. They convinced, but they did not convert the people. They made manifest both the danger and duty of men. They appealed to the understanding and the conscience, offered light and motive, and so left men without excuse. "They had no cloak for their sin." Farther than this the Savior's ministry did not seek to carry his hearers, only with their own free consent and co-operation.

To this point precisely has the Gospel carried its advances upon the sinner's conscience, and here the whole multitude of the irreligious stand at this present moment. Who of them all has not been brought to believe in the reality and necessity of personal religion? Whose conscience does not condemn him and justify God? Who does not know that it is his *duty* to repent and be converted? Who abides in his sins for lack of light, or motives, or incipient faith? Is there a

man who can truly say that he remains a stranger to piety, because he does not believe that the Bible is the word of God, and Christ the only Savior? Now, if all the miracles of Jesus were reproduced before the eyes of the impenitent, what could it add to their convictions or to their helps? Already the manifestations of divine truth are so convincing as to constitute the chief ground of their condemnation. Light is shining around them, but they love and will have darkness the rather. The kingdom of heaven has come so near that they have "seen the Father and the Son," but they have not received them. As yet they do not love them.

Let us inquire if stronger convictions and more powerful manifestations than the sinner now enjoys would be favorable to his conversion, for our text gives out upon this point a fearful intimation. So clear was the evidence exhibited to the Jews, that it is affirmed in a strong figure that "they had seen the Father and the Son;" and it is added that they hated them both. The light became so intense that it irritated the eye. Conviction too strong to be borne passively provokes active opposition. Weary under the incessant invitations and urgency of the divine compassion, the sinner is provoked to impatience and anger. He can not well endure the perpetual consciousness of ingratitude toward his divine benefactor, and he eludes it by changing his ground and assuming the attitude of an enemy. Every one in the least mindful of the workings of the unsanctified heart, will see in all this no more than is usual and natural. Here is made manifest a fundamental law of Christianity, and of the mind affected by its agencies. There is, there can be no such thing as neutrality in religion. "He that is not for me is against me!" The more Christ does to win a soul, the more flagrant the guilt that rejects him—the more manifest and urgent his overtures, the more egregious and barefaced the folly and sin of the impenitent. If Christ had not done works which no man could do, there had been no sin. Now there

is no cloak for sin. This stripping off of his mask—this exposure of his shame—is what the sinner will not bear quietly. He is even driven into a less equivocal position, in order to remain erect and maintain his self-respect. Increase the pressure of his convictions, and if he do not yield to them he must rally to a stronger opposition. He neglects, he slights, he resists, he contemns, he rejects, and he *hates* Christ, each in turn as he has occasion to dispose of the increasing clearness and urgency of his convictions. The text was uttered by our Lord just before his crucifixion, and at that period the Jews had run through this entire career of guilt, and so filled up the measure of their iniquities. They were now ready to condemn, to mock, and to murder that divine Redeemer, who had been foretold by their prophets and shadowed forth in their sacrifices—who had come away from fellowship with the Almighty and from the homage of angels, to become a poor, suffering stranger on this polluted earth, that he might gather the lost sheep of the house of Israel. What a spectacle was then exhibited! What a strange, barbarous people! They hated the Savior. Was he their enemy? Had he injured them? He went about among them doing good. He stretched out his hands to them all the day long. He wept over their anticipated sufferings. He loved them even unto death. Him, however, they hated, spurned, buffeted, crucified.

Impenitent sinners, you are ready to deny that you hate the blessed Redeemer. You think you even love him. You freely acknowledge him as Son of God and King of Israel. You do not doubt his word or his works. You admire the unfathomable riches of his wisdom and his grace, and you perhaps exult in the hope of finally becoming true spiritual disciples. You do not hate the Savior? God grant this may be so; but I fear for you. If you do not hate Jesus and his word, why reject them? If you approve heartily—if you really admire—why not receive and obey? You do not hate

religion, but you do its terms, its restraints, its duties, and that amounts to the same thing. Suppose that the Gospel imposed no crosses or self-denial, no mortifications or sacrifices. Suppose Jesus had said, "Blessed are the proud. Blessed are the wise. Blessed are the great, the ambitious, the luxurious, the rich." Suppose he had said, "Come unto me all ye that seek for power, or pleasure, or renown, or affluence—for costly raiment, and fine houses, and splendid equipages, and high places—come unto me, and I will give you success. I will teach you the art of overcoming obstacles, and supplanting rivals, and winning hearts. I will give health, and plenty, and glory." If these were the conditions of the Gospel, who would reject it? If you felt as sure of securing all this earthly good by becoming Christians as you do that repentance, and faith, and a holy life, will give you peace of mind and eternal glory, would you put off repentance for a single hour? Would you toil and voyage through heat and cold, by land and sea—would you keep midnight vigils—would you practice self-denial, and expose yourselves to bitter disappointments, if, by calling upon God and submitting to Christ, you could enter at once into the fruition of all you desire in life? I know what the answer would be. The preacher's voice would be drowned in a general outcry of consent to terms like these, and the whole eager multitude would rush forward to join hands in such a covenant with God. Now, however, when we have no such conditions and rewards to offer—when for this world we can only promise the cross, with "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," and for that which is to come, crowns and spotless robes, and a participation in the Redeemer's glory, men turn their ears away from our message, and begin with one consent to make excuse. Why is it so? Not for want of evidence or conviction—not for lack of light or miracles. Of them they have enough—far more than they like. Religion is unpalatable to them. They do not love it. They hate

its crosses and its unyielding strictness. And yet religion is but the transcript and image of the mind of Christ, and they who hate the Gospel, hate also the Father and the Son. "They have both seen and hated both me and my Father."

VII.

THE MISSIONARY SPIRIT A VITAL ELEMENT IN CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

We can not but speak the things which we have seen and heard.—Acts, iv., 20.

Just after the day of Pentecost, and in the midst of the excitement produced by its stirring events, Peter and John entered the temple at the hour of prayer. They were accosted at the gate by a beggar, a man impotent from his birth, who asked alms. These apostles, in their deep poverty, were unable to give pecuniary assistance; but they had just received an endowment of heavenly power, in virtue of which, in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, they bade the helpless cripple "Rise up and walk." Restored to perfect soundness by this magic word, the impotent man followed his strange benefactors into the temple, "leaping and praising God." It was the signal for a crowd eager for explanations, and Peter willingly seized the occasion for proclaiming the potency and compassion of that Jesus whom they had so recently rejected and murdered. In the midst of his thrilling discourse, a company of priests and Jewish dignitaries came upon him. At once alarmed and confounded at the boldness of Peter and John, who, nothing daunted by the murder of their Lord, charged home upon them the grievous crime, these respectable functionaries cast the offenders into prison till they could settle upon the course of policy to be pursued toward them. A grand council was assembled the next morning, before which the apostles were arraigned. Over-

awed by the courage and eloquence of these illiterate fishermen, and yet more by their wonder-working power, the high-priest and his associates feared to proceed to extremities, and were content for the present with forbidding them to speak in the name of Jesus, with threats of the most serious consequences. Mild and reasonable as they no doubt esteemed this decision, it was precisely that which all their authority and intimidation could not enforce. "Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye, for we can not but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

I. This reply announces a fundamental principle of our holy religion. *The Gospel is a system of propagandism.* By an eternal law, whoever believes in Christ must proclaim him to others. Whoever embraces Christianity, must diffuse it.

1. It is of the very nature and constitution of man to impart freely to his fellows of the ideas and convictions of his own mind. Every important truth longs for diffusion, and every ingenuous well-constituted mind is spontaneously impelled to share with others its own thoughts and the results of its own inquiries. It is unnatural and painful to be obliged to keep secret and undivulged the most ordinary or even trifling fact in which others as well as we may have an interest. In proportion as the facts of which we have become the depositaries are of high and general importance, the desire to proclaim them becomes stronger, until the mind is filled and controlled by a restless and irrepressible eagerness to make disclosures of its own sources of enjoyment, illumination, or power.

2. The divine mind, no less than that of man, obeys this universal impulse of all intelligent beings. The sublime conceptions of grandeur, of beauty, and benevolence which were native in the bosom of God, could not forever slumber in unfruitful musings. They must have a sphere of devel-

opment and manifestation. They yearned for the sympathy, the participation and approval of other intelligences, and the universe, with all its vastness and variety, its gorgeousness, and its glory, is but the expression of the great ideas that dwelt in the capacious mind of Jehovah, "who created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God."*

3. I have said that the inclination of the human mind to propagate its ideas is naturally strong and operative in proportion to their intrinsic importance. I need not stop to illustrate or enforce the obvious truth of this remark. It is self-evident, and I may proceed to a brief discussion of this principle in its relations to Christianity and Christian duty. As the salvation of the soul is an interest infinitely and above all others precious, so the propagation of the Gospel becomes of necessity the truest instinct as well as the highest duty of piety. Whoever is converted to God, and through faith made a partaker of Christ's love, is by that very fact set apart to the work of saving others. He has a mission to fulfill in regard to the spread of religion, announced in the conditions of his acceptance, and written upon his heart by the justifying, witnessing Spirit.

4. If the dispensation of God's truth "was as burning fire shut up in the bones" to the prophets of a lower dispensation, it is in every true believer a "light"—"*the* light of the world." "Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candle-stick; and it giveth light unto all who are in the house." "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven."† "Ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life."‡ Christians are "as leaven," and their nature and their function is to diffuse their spirit—to spread the leaven till the whole lump is leavened—the

* Eph., iii., 10. † Matth., v., 14–16. ‡ Phil., ii., 15, 16.

whole race converted. They are the "salt of the earth;" but if the salt hath lost its savor—if it can not or will not diffuse its properties—"wherewith shall it be salted?"—how shall the world be saved? "It is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men." That religion which has not power to propagate itself and save the world is nothing worth. We may not trust it for our own salvation. The sooner we cast it away as effete, and powerless, and spurious, the better for us. We are the soldiers of Christ. He is our great Captain and Leader. We wear his armor, and are marshaled under his banner, that we may subdue his enemies, and extend his empire. "We are laborers together with God," and our appointed task it is to sow the good seed beside all waters, to work in his vineyard, to reap and garner up his harvests. Of the manifold grace of God we are stewards, of whom it is expected that they be found faithful—that they carefully husband the means intrusted to them—that they increase their talents, that at the coming of the Lord they may restore unto him his own with usury.

5. While every scriptural statement of Christian character and duty presupposes or directly affirms the Christian function of laboring for the salvation of others, a strong desire to engage in this work is implanted in the heart of every true child of God. It is one of the first and strongest impulses of which the new-born soul becomes conscious; and the fervent, joyous gratitude which ascends as incense to heaven is soon and often interrupted by the strong entreaties and tears with which he beseeches relatives, and friends, and all sinners, to be reconciled to God. Wretchedly cold and indifferent as they soon become, all true Christians are born into the kingdom missionaries and propagandists. They long to signalize their zeal by turning many to righteousness. Their yearning sympathies go forth in quest of the wandering and the lost. In the new strength with which they are anointed,

they feel that it will be easy to persuade and constrain others. They do not doubt of success with friends and old associates, and they would annihilate time and space in their impatience to pour out their testimony for Christ in the presence of distant and long-forgotten companions. If their fervors are short-lived, and too soon decline to the common standard of the piety of those around, it is because they meet with no better countenance from older and more influential professors—because the atmosphere of the Church is too frigid, its spirit too poor, to sustain or even endure such examples of primitive, heaven-born piety. Not a few fall into discouragement at the unexpected difficulties which they are called to encounter. They do not find it so easy as they had fondly imagined to persuade a sinner to give up his idols and mortify his appetites. Tears and entreaties often fail to awaken sympathy, much less penitence, and the fervent neophyte encounters indifference, or opposition, or contempt, where he looked for some glorious triumph of God's grace over human depravity. There is need of enduring patience, and invincible charity, and omnipotent faith, in the work of saving souls, and they who come to this trial of all Christian graces with only a warm heart and an overweening confidence have many lessons to learn, and some, it may be, from the hard teachings of discomfiture and defeat. Comparatively few have the grace to welcome such a discipline, and submit to the toil and the painstaking requisite to the attainment of such virtue and wisdom as are indispensable to him who will become really a co-worker with Christ. The multitude of professors cease from all attempts to be aggressively and personally useful, and become well content if they do but maintain a fair reputation for piety, and some tolerable degree of satisfaction in regard to their own spiritual estate and prospects. So the spark of grace in their own souls be not quite extinct, they soon become content, though they neither burn nor shine. The thought of turning a sinner from the

error of his ways—the hope of adding a single star to Christ's glittering diadem—the sense of obligation either to go or send "into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature," have long since perished from within them. And yet these neglected, almost forgotten ends, are those for which we were redeemed by the blood of Christ, and called out of darkness into marvelous light; for which Christ's kingdom was established among men, and for which the quickening, sanctifying Spirit was given to the Church.

6. Brethren, let us look our duties and liabilities in this matter fairly in the face. We must confront them again ere long in an intenser and more convincing light than all the arguments and expostulations of this occasion can pour upon them. Doubtless, if we are Christians, we are pledged to propagate Christ's religion. "Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear;" but the vision and the message are not for us alone. They are the light of the world; "glad tidings that shall be for all people." If to us they are come with manifestation and power, it is just for that reason that "we can not but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

II. Let us contemplate our duty in the light of the great commandment on which hang all the law and the prophets: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself."

1. God is the father of all flesh, and hath made of one blood all nations of men. It is only in common with the Moslem, who exalts the false prophet above a crucified Redeemer; with the idolater, who renders to an image or a stock the worship due to the Most High; with the pagan, who deifies devils and bows down to reptiles, that we constitute the offspring of Jehovah and share his paternal sympathies. We are but too ready to forget that his tender mercies are over all his works. We too often think of the heathen races as comparatively of little importance in the great scale of being,

as of not much account in the esteem of God, and of infinitely less value in his eyes than the polished, intelligent Christian nations who enjoy, and so grievously abuse, the high privileges conferred upon them. And yet there is nothing in the Bible, nor in the reason of the thing, to give countenance to such opinions. On the contrary, we have the best ground for believing that God is no respecter of persons, and that he cherishes toward these unhappy races all the sentiments of compassion which befit the great Creator and Father of our fallen race. His permission of so much moral darkness and guilt is indisputably a great mystery, which must probably remain such till the clear light of eternity bursts upon us. Meantime, the will of God, of our Father and their Father, has been made perfectly clear. It is proclaimed in the tenor and spirit of his providential reign, who causes his sun to shine upon the just and the unjust. It is already defined and set forth by him who has commanded us to regard the stranger and the outcast as our brethren, and to pour oil and wine into the wounds of the apostate, hated Samaritan. Born, like ourselves, to immortal destinies, exposed to all the dire vicissitudes of life, and doomed to life's final, sad catastrophe, the heathen are our fellows, and our brethren in all that constitutes a claim upon God's compassion or upon his retributive judgments. It were a high insult upon his goodness to doubt whether he would have us impart to all men the blessings, moral and material, which have hitherto been engrossed by us. To have been the depository of such gifts, and to be responsible for having so long engrossed and monopolized them, will constitute the most fearful item in the final account, which as communities, and churches, and individuals, enlightened by the truth, we must all render unto God. And yet who will, who *can* lay this great truth to heart? Who effectively believes that God cares for barbarous pagans, and that he requires it of you and me to labor for their happiness?

2. Remember also, brethren, that Christ is a "Prince and a Savior," the rightful sovereign of boundless regions and countless populations revolted from his government, and hostile to his claims. By a covenant, the conditions of which have never yet been satisfied, the heathen are given to him for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession. Over the whole of his wide domain he longs to see his sway extended. He is now a monarch in exile from his own dominions, looking on from afar, and beholding his heritage laid waste by his enemies, and doing homage to his rivals. It is not for man to comprehend the full import of such statements as the Bible affords us on this subject; but we are taught, without a figure, that the great Captain of our salvation demands of all his true followers that they fight valiantly for the rescue of his purchased inheritance. We know full well that Jesus rejoices in spirit when he sees Satan falling as lightning from the high places which he has usurped. We know that he can be satisfied only when he shall see the travail of his soul. The conversion of the world was the great enterprise, to effect which the Prince of Life came down from heaven—for which he suffered and died. He still waits till his enemies be made his footstool. As yet we see not all things subjected unto him; and we know that, till his last enemy is subdued, till the world bow to his sceptre, and sin be abolished, Christ can not be "all and in all." The mediatorial kingdom must be sustained, and the final arrangements for his eternal reign in the midst of his glorious saints must needs be postponed till his Church shall perform the high duty assigned to it. "This Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations, and then shall the end come."* To not a few professors of religion the motives here suggested may appear trivial, and even fanciful; but, to the truly devoted disciple, who has learned much in the school of Christ,

* Matthew, xxiv., 14.

and who sympathizes deeply with all that affects his honor and his designs, this spirit of loyalty gradually becomes the most pervading and powerful of his principles of action. He longs, above all things, for the coming and universal reign of Christ. No vision so fills his imagination and swells his heart as the glorious promises, yet to be fulfilled, of the increase of Messiah's kingdom, and of his final triumph over all his foes, to be achieved openly, in the presence of ungodly men, and of principalities and powers in heavenly places.

3. But Christ is not only a Prince and a Savior, but the Savior of all men, especially of them that believe. I need not recount to you the sacrifices, the labors, the sufferings by which he paid the redemption-price of a world of lost souls. Let these remind you of the strength and fervor of that divine compassion which sustained him in the humiliation of his life and the agonies of his cross, and remember always that it was the world he loved—for the world he died. O! do not imagine that his benevolent regards had exclusive respect to the comparatively small portion of the sinful race who have been converted to Christianity. He came to seek and to save that which was lost. Sinners were the special objects of his mission, and sinners of every race and clime were provided for in the great catastrophe of his last hour. Having paid for all the ransom of his blood, all are brought into the same relation to him, and their salvation is an object of equal importance; or rather, the outcast, the most remote, the most hopeless sinners, are those who awaken his special sympathies. He is ever ready to leave the flock gathered into the fold, and to go into the wilderness in quest of the lost sheep. It is for the prodigal, whose substance is all squandered, who feeds on husks, that he feels the tenderest emotions. Over one sinner that repenteth is his joy greater than over ninety-and-nine just persons who need no repentance. Jerusalem, the city of his enemies, of his persecutors and murderers, called forth his tears and most tender expostula-

tions. His thoughts are not as our thoughts. We are ever misled by shallow appearances. He judges righteously, and bends upon the outcast, upon the neglected sailor, upon the African or the Hindoo, a regard as tender and appreciating as upon the polished citizen, the lord of a stately mansion, and worshiper in a gorgeous temple. He is no respecter of persons. The soul of any one of the millions of China is as precious in his sight as yours or mine, and its salvation an object equally dear to him. For us he has shed his blood, he has sent the Holy Spirit, has borne with our manners, has healed our backslidings, and watched over us from year to year with incessant vigilance, in order that we may be saved. With what heart, think ye, does he look down upon the baptized heathens among us, upon the ignorant, unevangelized emigrants who throng our cities and people our forests, upon the five hundred millions of pagans for whose salvation we are but just beginning to make some most inadequate exertions! O! could we think of them as equally dear to Christ with ourselves, as equally capable of being made the trophies of his grace and the heirs of heaven, as equally exposed to danger and ruin without a Savior, how would our zeal be quickened, and our efforts and sacrifices multiplied!

4. It remains that we briefly contemplate our duty in the light of the other great commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" — a law written upon our hearts by the finger of God not less legibly than upon the pages of holy Scripture. This comprehensive directory of our entire duty toward our fellow-men, requires obviously, and at the very least, that we be animated with a strong desire to diminish the ills and multiply the enjoyments of our fellow-creatures. If we are strong and others weak, we must protect. If rich, we must succor the poor; if wise, we must instruct the ignorant. We must impart our discoveries, diffuse our light, till all within the sphere of our

influence be made partakers of whatever is excellent in our arts, our institutions, our habits, our ideas; in a word, in our entire civilization and morals. To do less than all this were inhuman no less than unchristian. The wretch who should monopolize all the bread in a starving city, or refuse to send his boat to the rescue of the passengers and crew of a sinking ship, is neither more cruel nor more guilty than they who look with indifference upon the moral degradation of their fellow-men, and withhold the antidote for moral and social maladies a thousand times more terrible than famine or shipwreck. What should we think of the physician who, having discovered and thoroughly tested a sure preventive or sovereign remedy for the Asiatic cholera, should wholly omit to communicate his knowledge, should neither carry nor send his potent medicament to the millions who are dying of this fearful disease in distant parts of the world, content with the reflection that he shall be able to insure the safety of himself and family when the pestilence approaches? With what terms of bitter reproach would you stigmatize the man who, having become acquainted with a specific against the singular disease by which the staple food of the poor in Ireland was destroyed, had refused to cross the sea, and left the doomed millions of that unhappy country to the unspeakable horrors through which they have passed. Our American Churches knew well enough what the law of love demanded at their hands in that pressing exigency. Men of the world responded heartily to the appeal of suffering humanity. We sent out our messengers of condolence and mercy full-handed. We freighted our ships with food for the starving. The poor among us claimed it as a privilege to help in this great ministry of compassion. Our mothers and daughters wrought with their needles to send out warm garments for the naked sufferers, the story of the famine having awakened a lively sympathy for all the ills of the poor. It was well—it is a subject of high congratulation, that more was contributed in half a year

to meet the urgent physical want of Ireland than all that has been expended by all our Christian denominations in any two or three years for the conversion and salvation of the five hundred millions of perishing souls included in our great commission, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." Rejoicing in and cordially approving of this great movement of philanthropy, I may yet ask a Christian assembly if the want so nobly relieved was more urgent than the want so long and so grievously neglected? As a work of necessity and mercy, is it more humane, more truly benevolent to supply the wants of a famine-stricken multitude, than it is to give the bread of life to those who are ready to perish? I may not frame another's reply to this question, but I will answer for myself. I had rather die of hunger, and be tumbled uncoffined into the pauper's capacious grave, than to spend my days in worshiping an idol. I had rather see my children grow pale and haggard, and then die in an Irish hovel, that most wretched of all human habitations, than to have them grow up strangers to Christ and his Gospel. Famine and pestilence are unquestionably great evils. Human eloquence can not overdraw them. It is dismal to think of what happened to hundreds of families and thousands of individuals under that sad visitation. But if we had eyes to see and ears to hear, there are worse things than these. Physical sufferings are temporary. They lack the attribute of ETERNITY, which enters into every view of the melancholy condition of unevangelized races. They have indeed power to kill the body, but after that they have no more that they can do. Fear ye that which hath power to destroy the soul in hell. Cast about and see if succor may be found for wants and woes that have only their beginning at the point where worldly ills have lost their victims and their power. Viewed in the light which revelation affords us, the decimation of an entire people, the annihilation of a kingdom, were a small evil compared with the spiritual

wants of a single unevangelized family or neighborhood. To those who have learned to estimate good and evil by the high standard of the Gospel, this will not seem an extravagant proposition. I will not attempt to illustrate it for others, for my object is to inculcate Christian duty upon the avowed and real followers of Christ. With them it will be a good argument for my present purpose to remind them that the destitute and the guilty souls toward whose salvation we entreat them to contribute their sympathies and their substance, are all left dependent upon the intervention of Christ; neither is there given any other name under heaven whereby men can be saved. If they sometimes doubt whether it comes within the purview of the Church's mission to busy itself with the interests of those providentially removed far from the sphere of its customary activities, the force of such a difficulty will be much diminished by an honest and single-hearted study of the terms of that commission, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." If any among us are disposed to a measure of skepticism in regard to the evil state and prospects of the unevangelized, and are ready to leave them to do the best they can by the light of nature, and in the absence of the Gospel, to work out their destiny as they may by the law "written in their hearts," we may commend them to the example of Paul as the best interpreter of his language upon this deep and awful subject—to the untiring zeal with which he devoted his life to the diffusion of the Gospel as the sinner's only hope, among those pagan nations for whom his reference to the possibility of attaining a saving piety amid pagan destitution and darkness, is thought by some to hold out a hope so cheering and satisfactory.

III. According to the views which I have presented, the missionary spirit is a spontaneous product of true Christianity, while the missionary work is a sacred duty of every Chris-

tian. Happy are they who, from the commencement of their religious life, have been true to the unerring instincts of a fervent piety, and have deeply sympathized with the longings of the crucified Savior for the conversion of immortal souls. No style of religion is so well calculated to give depth, and breadth, and stability to Christian character—to insure high and enduring spiritual enjoyments. Our piety is liable to become straitened, and bigoted, and hard, when we are too exclusively engaged with our own interests. Wisely and mercifully are we commanded to care for the things of others. It is the surest way to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ; for it nurtures charity, the best of all the graces, and likens us to Christ in the largeness of his views and the opulence of his sympathy. Such Christians are never cold, and they never backslide. They become identified with the Savior in all his plans. They exult in his triumphs, and rejoice in his joys. Their vision and their prayers embrace the whole earth, and they become familiar with the largest plans and the most stirring enterprises. In the midst of such interests and employments there is little room for sloth or stagnation. Worldly ambitions and low self-seeking are rebuked by perpetual contact with the more absorbing interests, and the more elevating aspirations which belong to this higher sphere of Christian activities. Christians of this stamp outstrip all others in the race. They speedily attain the highest moral efficiency and the clearest spiritual perceptions, unusual vigor, and steadiness of faith, and power in prayer. I think it may be announced as a maxim in religion, that they who devote themselves most eagerly to the salvation of others are ever in the most favorable position for working out their own salvation.

Perhaps the larger portion of Christians are conscious of no such spontaneous impulses toward the evangelizing work. If they "can not but speak the things which they have seen and heard," the urgency comes from the strength of their

convictions rather than from any very decided warming of the heart toward such interests. Well, be it so. Obedience to the stern dictates of conscientious convictions, even though difficult and half reluctant, is an excellent moral exercise, and leads to better things. It is perhaps designed for our good that duties are often crosses. Prayer and praise are not always offered without a struggle. Self-denial and cross-bearing are never pleasant, though they are always abundant in good fruits. By laboring, and praying, and giving, for the promotion of the evangelizing movement, we take the most direct method to awaken within ourselves a more lively interest. By working together with Christ, we make ourselves partners in the concern, and must by-and-by share in its proper sentiments and emotions. It is only in this way that the feelings of a Christian can be made to harmonize with many of his duties. Let him act because it is his duty, and right action will gradually become easy and pleasant. Whatever may be his taste and feeling in regard to the missionary enterprise, I am free to say that I do not see how any Christian can neglect it and be guiltless. The days of ignorance God winked at, but now the argument is before the Church. Light is abundant and irresistible, if men will but open their eyes. He only who loves darkness rather than light can with any decency pretend to doubt that it is the duty of the Church to diffuse the Gospel throughout the world. If of the Church, then it is the duty of the Christians who constitute the Church—of every Christian—for all can pray, and all can give according as God hath prospered them.

IV. The principles deduced from our text are applicable alike to all missionary enterprises; to foreign and home missions; to missions in populous cities, in frontier settlements, beyond the seas, or among the amphibious, neglected class who, belonging exclusively to neither the land nor the sea, have not been embraced in any sphere of the Church's char-

ities. It is for this special class, the sailors, that an expression of your missionary zeal and liberality is solicited this morning. Why should you care for sailors?

1. Because they are a class the most needy and neglected of any. They are much upon the sea, without preaching, or Sabbaths, or instruction. They are away from social and domestic restraints, and are exposed to peculiar temptations. They constitute a separate caste, peculiar in their dress, their dialect, and their manners, so that they naturally keep apart from the other classes. They do not visit or eat with them. They do not go to their churches. They do not belong to any pastoral charge. As the result of all these peculiarities, other classes take little interest in them. They are shunned —by many they are half feared, and looked upon as hardly belonging to the species man. There is only one exception to this estrangement. A number of persons in every city live by imposing upon the sailor when he lands. They tempt him. They cheat and rob him. They corrupt, and cast him off when his money is gone. These and many other circumstances estrange the sailor from the ordinary means of grace. There is no Gospel for him, practically, more than for the Hindoo. Think, too, that he specially needs to be an honest man and a Christian. He has charge of the vast wealth embarked in commerce. He is exposed to storms, and fires, and shipwreck. He dies, and goes to his last reckoning, before he reaches half the age of ordinary men. You will not ask now why you should evangelize the sailor. He has an immortal soul. He is a great sinner. He is the neediest, most neglected man in Christendom. Christ, had his mission brought him among us, would have gone to the sailor first of all, for he is the publican and sinner of our times.

2. The sailor is remarkable as a sinner. Convert him, and he usually becomes a remarkable Christian. He is a fearless, straight-forward man ever, and will seldom desert his new colors. The chance is that he was not wont to

blush or be abashed at his sins, and now he is not ashamed of Christ. His words, his purse, his person, are Christ's henceforth. I have had many occasions to remark the moral heroism and Christian fidelity of the converted sailor. He shames the religion of landsmen, I assure you. He often becomes a missionary in his voyages. He carries the Gospel to all countries which commerce visits, and especially to his own craft.

3. All of this may be truly said in favor of any mission to sailors. More may be claimed in favor of the North River Bethel-ship, John Wesley. It is specially for foreign seamen. The missionary preaches statedly to Norwegians, Swedes, Danes, and Fins, in their native tongue. Those regions around the Baltic are the great hive from which sailors swarm forth, and they already supply a large proportion of the men who navigate our ships. It was hardly ever heard of that one of these sailors came to us a pious man. The religion of their own country, though Protestant, is dreadfully corrupt; it is infidelity, or little better. One hundred or more of these men have been converted during the last year or two, and now sail under a new flag. They pray in the forecastle, and give away tracts and Bibles, and carry back their new-born, burning zeal to the ports of Northern Europe, and become missionaries to their own countrymen. Think of these converts of the "John Wesley" holding prayer-meetings in Copenhagen and St. Petersburgh, and pouring out their fervent testimony for a present, living Savior, amid the dry bones of those fallen churches! It is precisely what they are doing every week; so that, by sustaining this ship and this missionary, you will convert many other ships into Bethels, and send out scores of the truest missionaries.

4. There is one more idea worthy of notice. It has lately become usual for emigrants from these nations to seek a home. Nearly thirty thousand have lately gone to Wisconsin. They land in New York. They hear the Gospel in the

Bethel-ship, and receive the good seed to carry it with them to their new home. We have lately heard of those who did not hear in vain, and who are likely to lay the foundation of new churches in the West—to be missionaries to their countrymen there. Others have returned home, enriched with the newly-discovered treasure. Great results will certainly follow perseverance in this good work.

VIII.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me, for as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come.—1 Cor., xi., 25, 26.

I. What the Lord's Supper is not.

1. It is not to partake of the real body and blood of Christ. It is well known that the Roman Catholic Church affirms, that the bread and wine are, by the act of consecration, changed, or, as they term it, *transubstantiated*, into the very body and blood of the Savior, a doctrine founded upon the evidently figurative language of Christ, "This is my body—this is my blood." Before a Protestant assembly, the statement of this doctrine is a refutation of it. The Scripture authority vanishes when we consider the rhetorical language which our Savior was accustomed to apply to himself and others. He called himself a shepherd, a door, a vine. He called Peter a rock. James and John were sons of thunder. The New Testament is full of forms of speech which convey an obvious sense under a figurative form, and in none is the figurative character more manifest than when the Savior calls himself the "bread of life," or says, "my flesh is meat indeed," or of the elements of the communion, "this is my body—this is my blood."

As the doctrine in question is unsupported by the Scriptures, so also it is rejected by all the tests usually resorted to to decide questions of fact. The elements used in the communion, in the hands of a Catholic no less than in those of other clergymen, are still veritable bread and wine to the eye, to the touch, to the smell, to the taste. So, too, they must have appeared to the apostles. By no possibility could they have taken them to be the flesh and blood of their Master, who stood before them in his proper person, which neither the nails that fastened him to the cross, nor the soldier's spear had yet marred. Finally, the language of our text, as well as the parallel passages in the evangelists, contradict the Romish doctrine. The Lord's Supper is to be taken in "remembrance" of Christ and his death, and can not, therefore, be the crucified Christ himself.

2. The Lord's Supper is not a sacrifice—an offering for sin. It is a representation of the great sacrifice, and therefore not the thing itself. The text settles this question. Other portions of holy Scripture explicitly declare that all sacrifices ceased with the offering of Christ upon the cross. As all the sacrifices under the Jewish economy pointed to this great expiatory offering, and derived from it their efficacy, so all succeeding generations were appointed to find forgiveness of sins, and acceptance with God, by the exercise of faith in this one oblation made by Christ of his own body on the tree. "Who needeth not daily, as those high-priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's; for this he did once, when he offered up himself."* "By his own blood he entered in once to the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."† "Once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin (or a sin-offering) unto

* Heb., vii., 27. † Ibid., ix., 12.

salvation."* These passages, to which more might be added, conclusively refute the theory which assigns to the Lord's Supper the character of a sacrifice for sin. I might have relied upon the argument adduced under my first proposition, that the consecrated bread and wine are not the real body and blood of Christ; for if they are not, then they are not his sacrifice for sin, which consisted of his broken body and shed blood; but it seemed important to enter into the subject more fully, as the theory in question has latterly obtained a good deal of currency in this country.

3. The elements employed in the Lord's Supper undergo no change. The act of consecration imparts to them no new properties or powers, and they remain simple bread and wine. Their sacramental efficacy depends wholly upon God's blessing attendant on his own ordinance, and upon the penitence, faith, and other favorable dispositions of the communicant.

I have two reasons for dwelling upon these preliminary statements. 1. Many sincere Christians entertain very erroneous and even superstitious views in regard to the Lord's Supper, as if it were imbued with some magical, preternatural power for good or for evil. They are disposed to trust to it for influences which are not inherent in it, or to look upon it with dread as liable to inflict upon the soul some dark, appalling calamity. Many shun the Lord's table as if it were beset with snares, and are only induced to communicate infrequently and with apparent reluctance. 2. These erroneous views of the nature and design of the Lord's Supper have given rise to exclusive and arrogant claims to ministerial authority. It is claimed that the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are endowed with power to convert and sanctify the soul, but that they possess this efficiency only when administered by clergymen set apart to the ministry in a certain way. Regeneration, growth in grace,

* Heb., ix., 26, 28.

and final salvation, are thus made dependent upon the functions of a bishop and the ecclesiastical pedigree of the administrator. It follows that none but these have any right to the ministry—that all others are dangerous intruders, who destroy but can not save souls. These vain and arrogant pretensions, so pernicious to the Church, and so incompatible with Christian humility, are swept away before the simple scriptural view of the sacrament which has been adduced. It is no sacrifice, and therefore wants no priest. Its efficacy depends upon God's grace, which is freely communicated to all who come to the Lord's table with humble faith in Christ. It is, therefore, to the divine mercy and to the heart we are to look, and not to any ecclesiastical pretensions.

II. WHAT THE LORD'S SUPPER IS.

1. It is a remembrancer of Christ: "Do this as often as ye do it in remembrance of me." It is a representation of the great central fact of the Gospel, "As oft as ye do this, ye do show the Lord's death."

In condescension to human weakness, our Savior was pleased to ordain in his Church a perpetual institution that should set forth to the senses of men the one great event on which, and on their right apprehension and use of it, their salvation should depend. It is a well-known law of our nature, that sensible objects affect us much more surely and intensely than abstract truths addressed to the intellect. The sight of suffering moves us much more than reading or hearing an account of it. To see and converse with a distinguished individual gives us a far more vivid and memorable impression of his person and character than the most minute and eloquent description. In the Lord's Supper an appeal is made to this great law of our humanity, and Christ has been pleased to intrust the manifestation of the great fundamental truth of the Gospel, even his own sacrificial death upon the cross, to the most imposing and essential visible ordinance of his house. God had adopted the same method of perpetua-

ting his truth under the Jewish dispensation; and there is good reason to believe that their great festal observances, in which the whole nation was statedly called to participate, were the chief means of preserving among this people the knowledge of their religion and law. Few in their state of society could have possessed or read the Scriptures; public preaching was unknown; and the festivals, together with the ceremonies of the temple service, were the great teachers of the people. It was the avowed object of the Passover, the Feast of Tabernacles, etc., to keep alive, through successive generations, a vivid memorial of the great facts in the history of God's dealings with their ancestors, and even the sacrifices of the temple had a like symbolical reference to Christ, the great oblation for sin afterward to be revealed.

Our text, in common with other Scriptures, affirms the same design to belong to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper; it is a remembrancer of Christ; it shows forth his death through all ages of the world, till he come as judge of quick and dead. In this age of Bibles and ample religious instruction, it is difficult to comprehend the importance of the function fulfilled, for former generations, by this holy institution. It was difficult to corrupt it, when both doctrines and morals were every where corrupt; for Christ had prescribed not only the duty, but the method and means of performing it, with such plainness and particularity, that it was little liable to be misunderstood. As all were personally to participate in this ordinance, the instruction conveyed by it was popularized and widely diffused. Addressed to the senses, and appealing strongly to the imagination and the heart, this impressive rite was peculiarly adapted to the masses, who in dark, unlettered ages, when even the clergy were unable to read, were incapable of acquiring knowledge by ways familiar to us, and yet were especially susceptible to impressions made upon their sensitive constitution. Consider, also,

that much more importance was attached to this sacrament in primitive times than at present. It seems to have constituted their chief act of Christian worship, and was celebrated in their regular assemblies from Sabbath to Sabbath. The Lord's Supper thus became the chief means of keeping alive, through the dark ages of the world, a knowledge of Christianity. It has been, from age to age, a perpetual witness for the truth as it is in Jesus. Throughout the darkness, and corruptions, and superstitions of past centuries, Christ has thus been evidently set forth among the people as crucified. Even the highly exaggerated views that prevailed in regard to the design and efficacy of the sacrament were wisely overruled to make it more effectual as a standing testimony; nor are we allowed to doubt that many simple, upright souls found, in the sincere and even superstitious devotion with which they were wont to partake of the affecting emblems of the Redeemer's passion, a measure of that grace and consolation which fit the spirit of man for higher communion above.

If this holy institution served as a beacon-light in darker days than ours, and kept alive in the world a measure of divine knowledge when the revelations of Christ were in danger of becoming extinct, it fulfills a function not less important in our own times. *Now* religious knowledge abounds, and the Bible is read by all. The fruits of this change, however, are not all good. If every body reads the Scriptures, every body, too, assumes to interpret them; and the result is a great diversity of sects and an endless variety of religious opinions. In such a state of things there is always a strong tendency to lose sight of fundamental truths, which all parties, perhaps, at the first hold in common, and to magnify those unessential peculiarities which are the badges of sect, and therefore chief themes of controversy, into prominent and vital doctrines, till Christ is banished from his own kingdom of recovering grace. By far the most effectual barrier

in the way of such a result is found, I am persuaded, in the perpetual remembrance of the crucified Savior in the holy sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Here Christ is forced upon our vision as the chief actor in the deeper scenes of our redemption. We "show forth" this great truth of the Gospel in the breaking of bread, and in the consecrated juice of the grape. We not only symbolize it to the world, but we inculcate it upon our own hearts. So powerful is this teaching, that no community of Christians who continue to have the Lord's Supper celebrated among them can long refuse to acknowledge the great significant doctrines of the cross. So true is this, that those denominations which deny the doctrines of Christ's atonement and divinity, almost always neglect the sacrament. Indeed, how can they who deny that he was made a sacrifice for sin, celebrate an ordinance whose avowed object it is to keep that transcendent fact in perpetual remembrance? They lay chief stress upon Christ's moral teaching, and pure, illustrious example of all virtues. Not so the instructive symbol which speaks to the inmost soul of every true disciple when he comes into most intimate communing with his Lord. Not the teachings, nor the examples, but the death of Christ, is what we are called to show forth till he come. This silent monitor, to which Christ intrusted his doctrine and his honor, proclaims evermore to all sincere souls the death of Jesus—his one sacrifice on the cross—the breaking of his body, and the shedding of his blood, as the only procuring cause of pardon and salvation—as the one cardinal truth to which all else is secondary. "I am resolved to know nothing among you but Christ, and him crucified." "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." "There is no other name given under heaven whereby men can be saved." Such are the announcements by which the holy communion plies the heavy ear of the world with proclamations of its Redeemer's compassion; such is God's chosen method of inculcating upon

the heart of the Church the consoling, transforming doctrine by which its triumphs are to be achieved.

2. Unquestionably, the atoning sacrifice made upon the cross is the great truth which the Last Supper was commissioned to show forth until the Savior come again to judge the world. It is in remembrance of Him, not as a teacher or a philanthropist, but as "an offering for sin," that we celebrate this memorable feast. But this is not the only great lesson intrusted to this most expressive symbol. It seems, on the contrary, to contain and inculcate an epitome of all the really essential evangelical doctrines. I am sure no serious mind will esteem this a fanciful hypothesis, who will be at the pains to meditate thoughtfully and reverently upon the subject. That it is the proper function of the Lord's Supper to teach important Christian truth, the language of our text directly affirms. "This do ye in remembrance of me." "As oft as ye do this ye do show the Lord's death." For what conceivable purpose is this memorial, this manifestation, but to impress upon ourselves and upon others the momentous truths embodied in this rite? What, then, is the amount of the truth so set forth? what the contents of the symbol? Chiefly, as I have already stated, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, so far as its teaching is concerned, proclaims the great fact, fundamental and pre-eminent in the Christian system, of the atonement made upon the cross. Not less distinctly and surely does it inculcate other correlative truths. It sets forth *the guilt and helplessness of man* for which this great expiation was needed. The *hatefulness of sin* in the sight of God is manifested, since it required so great a ransom. How fearful the guilt which nothing could remove but the Redeemer's blood! If a less costly offering would have made satisfaction, the sacrifice of Calvary had surely never been made. Had it been possible, *this* cup should have passed away from the adorable Redeemer. *How dreadful the conditions—*

how déep the stain which called for such a sacrifice! How deadly the moral disease which would yield to no less po tent a remedy! All this becomes visible in this holy ordi nance. We see it in the visible emblems. We feel and taste it in the consecrated elements of which we partake. Our penitent, trusting, melting hearts recognize these first principles of evangelical piety in this hour of their deep, lively communion with their Savior, and the ordinance announces them to the world with an effective emphasis which no utterance made by human tongues can aspire to equal.

3. The sacrament also proclaims the coming of Christ to be the judge of quick and dead at the last day. That this is one of its objects, is asserted by the text—"Ye do show the Lord's death till he come." The self-examination, the earnest struggle of faith, the deep sense of guilt and unworthiness, and the agonizing prayer for pardon, which constitute the appropriate exercises of this occasion, and the joyful communion with the Savior to which the true believer is admitted, do naturally and strongly remind a thoughtful soul of the last and final reckoning, when all are to be judged according to the deeds done in the body, and when the justified shall be admitted to go no more out, into the assembly of the first-born, to be forever with the Lord.

4. These are some, perhaps the chief of the Christian truths, which it is the appointed function of the Lord's Supper to "show forth," and bring evermore to the world's remembrance. There are others which this impressive ordinance seems designed more immediately to impress upon the hearts of true believers for their comfort and edification, and to seal them as Christ's to the day of redemption. Most impressively and unequivocally does it set forth to their inner sense the infinite mercy of God. This broken body and shed blood, of which they handle and taste the affecting emblems, are those of his only-begotten, well-beloved son, who was freely given to die, the "just for the unjust." What assurance is

here afforded that God will carry on his work in us and save us. He that spared not his only son, but freely gave him for us all, will he withhold any good thing from them that love him? Having made the great sacrifice, and sent out from his embraces the heir of all things to become a sufferer and a victim, will he withhold minor gifts? Will he fail to bestow grace and glory upon the willing and obedient? Perhaps the believer, in his moments of despondency, amid the world's cares, or in the day of temptation, may find himself unable to put away all fear, and rise up to the mastery over every lingering doubt. But can he hesitate *here*, in the presence of the Lord, in the participation of the feast, with the speaking emblems of the Redeemer's passion, the eloquent pledges of God's love, and willingness to save full before him? I think not. In proportion as his soul enters into the spirit of this service and "discerns the Lord's body," will it triumph over all its base, unreasonable fears, and tender to God's promises the fullest credence and the broadest welcome.

5. This ordinance has, when properly attended to, a direct and powerful tendency to bring to the soul the assurance of God's forgiveness and complacency. The high and unjustifiable claim set up by those who regard the sacrament as a proper sacrifice, which, in virtue of the priest's authority, insures to all but the greatest offenders the pardon of their sins, is realized to the fullest extent by all who communicate in a proper spirit. Of all such it may be said, without hesitation, that their sins are all forgiven them. This is, indeed, the common privilege of penitent, believing souls, but it is *specially* extended to all who worthily partake of the body and blood of the crucified Redeemer. God will be sought unto for such unspeakable favors, and the fervent, effectual prayer of a righteous man always availeth much. In this ordinance God seeks us, and "waiteth to be gracious." He covers his table with the palpable, visible pledges of his forgiving love. He makes his moving appeal to our senses as

well as to the intellect and the heart, and invites all who hunger and thirst to come and be satisfied. These impressive circumstances offer, and they are designed to offer, peculiar facilities for the invigoration of our faith; and, in fact, I think it historically true, that Christians find pardon, comfort, and spiritual refreshment here more frequently than in any other religious service. They go away from the Lord's table having their hearts touched, with their worldliness subdued, with brightened visions of the future, with strong resolutions of obedience and love, which they seldom feel in the same degree under any other circumstances. "He forgiveth all their sins, and their transgressions will he remember no more forever."

6. This ordinance gives to those who eat and drink worthily a lively sense of their incessant dependence on Christ's atonement. The supplies of his grace are needed by the soul, in order to its health and vigor, as much as natural food and drink are by the body; and as we are commanded to pray for our daily bread, that the natural life may be preserved, so do we want from Christ's atonement, the great reservoir of all good, constant supplies of grace, in order to the maintenance of spiritual life. Most beautifully and impressively do the simple elements employed in the feast set forth this affecting truth.

7. With similar vivacity and impressiveness does it symbolize *the intimacy of the believer's union with Christ.* He had already exhausted the resources of language in the inculcation of this consoling, glorious truth. He is the Vine—his disciples the branches. He the Good Shepherd—they the sheep of his pasture. He and they are brethren of one great family. They are one with him, as he is one with the Father—are joint heirs with him to the heavenly inheritance. In the holy communion we have a new and still more effective exhibition of this doctrine. Christ is the food on which spiritual life is sustained. His followers eat of his flesh and

drink of his blood. He is blended with their existence. They live, and move, and have their being, in him. He is in them — lives in their life — moves in their activities — rejoices in their joys. He dwells in them, and they in him. Their oneness becomes inseparable and indissoluble, till God is in all their thoughts, and the secret places of the soul are full of him.

8. This act of communion inculcates, with no less emphasis, the intimate union of Christians with each other. They are together brought into contact with their common Savior. Together, as the children of one family, they receive bread and wine at a common table, from a common Father and Benefactor. It is touching to see the mixed groups who press together up to the place where Jesus dispenses his divine hospitalities. One want is felt by all. All are equally poor and equally dependent, and look to one common hand for supplies. They partake of the same spiritual food, and drink the same spiritual drink. What a place is this for hushing controversies—for forgetting grudges—for forgiving injuries —for burying enmities! Who, rejoicing here in the Savior's love, will not resolve to love his brother also? Will not all, gazing rapturously upon Christ's ineffable glory, be changed into the same image, and, becoming like him, also become like one another? None can reasonably doubt the powerfully harmonizing and fraternizing influence of the communion of saints. Many holy friendships begin there. There many prejudices are parted with. Those who have aught against their brother settle with him by the way; or, in default of a pacific and forgiving spirit on his part, put the fire out of their own bosom, that they bring no strange flame to the altar. Oh! it is a glorious sight, on which angels delight to gaze, when the rich and the poor, the gentle and the simple, meet together, and, in their glowing love for Christ, find themselves made one with each other also.

III. After discussing so much at large the true design and

uses of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, we are prepared to give a rational answer to a question sometimes formally proposed, but much more frequently dwelt upon in thoughtful, embarrassed silence—*Why should I go to the Lord's table and partake of the holy sacrament?*

1. One reply, and that a most valid and conclusive one, is always at hand, and is often given. It is Christ's command that you do so: "Do this in remembrance of me." This is a sufficient reason to every Christian mind. Obedience to Christ is the great law of his Church—is the highest, holiest of motives, and the most comprehensive and exalted of Christian virtues. It is our bounden duty to obey each word of the Savior, though we are able to see no reason for his injunctions—though they conflict with reason. The command is itself the ultimate, all-comprehensive reason before which we must bow in believing, adoring submission.

2. It is yet most satisfactory to be able to comprehend the object and advantage of God's commandments. It makes obedience intelligent—it enables us to offer a reasonable service. Regular and devout attendance on the sacrament is such a service—the duty rests upon cogent reasons, not less than on a positive precept. In it we show forth the Savior's death. We announce for Christ, in the presence of angels and sinful men, the fundamental principles of the Christian system—those on which the divine glory and the soul's salvation do most essentially depend. These high doctrines were not to be left undistinguished on the page of revelation. To give them prominence and effect commensurate with their high significance in the plan of salvation, they must be embodied in the most imposing of Christian observances. They might not be intrusted to the pulpit, for that is corruptible, and sometimes utters an uncertain sound. They might not be confided to human language and forms of speech, which change with time, and cease altogether to convey justly and effectually the great truths of which they were the depository.

Not so the impressive, venerable rite which has remained unchanged from age to age, the same emphatic announcement through centuries of ignorance and corruption, speaking forth God's great plan for saving sinners, showing forth Christ's sacrificial death until he come to be the judge of quick and dead. To the eyes, to the ears, to the touch, to the taste, to the hearts of men, does the glorious Gospel of the Son of God thus evermore make its appeal. Each sincere communicant, as he bows in deep, eloquent silence, and joyfully receives the consecrated elements, lifts up a voice of invitation and of warning, and cries to the sleeping world, "Behold, behold the Lamb!" He becomes himself a sign—a visible representation of the Gospel. It is thus that the believer is called upon to confess Christ before men. He does not satisfy this duty merely by being a passive member of the Church, or what is technically denominated a *professor* of religion. He is to *confess* him before men—to stand up in his lot—to form part and parcel of that array and movement which keeps alive and manifest in the world the realities of the Gospel. He is to be seen under his chosen banners—one evidently and confessedly of the sacramental host—not ashamed of Christ, not afraid of Christ's enemies—"holding forth the word of life"—showing forth the Savior's death. He is to be a witness for the truth as it is in Jesus—of its power and its purity—to others one of a cloud of witnesses. This faithful, prompt, unshrinking, manly bearing in regard to his cause and character does Christ demand from each of his followers. Not one can lawfully be absent from his post in any hour of confession, or manifestation, or trial. When, as to-day, we renew our oath of allegiance and our professions of loyalty to the Savior—when we proclaim our faith in the great sacrifice for sin, and announce before heaven and earth that the death of Christ alone gives life to sinful man, and unbars the gates of glory to his ransomed spirit—there should ever be, for the honor of Christ, an imposing front and crowded ranks.

Not a right hand should be missed from among those which are raised up for the renewal of solemn vows—not a voice should be wanting in the full chorus of praise. Let every soldier stand in the line on this day of review. Let every witness for the truth as it is in Jesus be ready with his testimony in all utterance, and assurance, and knowledge, to give a reason for the hope that is in him. Let every son and daughter press forward to the festive board to swell the tide of fraternal sympathy and filial gratitude, and to multiply the father's joy. It is the day of the Church's consolation and strength, when she is called to lift up her head in the presence of her enemies and vouch for the Lord that he is God, and the only Savior.

3. Let such considerations suffice for the inculcation of attendance on the sacrament as a high Christian duty. *It is also a precious Christian privilege.*

It is, indeed, a law of our holy religion that great duties become in their performance great privileges. They who labor diligently to convert souls save themselves as well as those who hear them. They who refresh others are themselves watered. They who sacrifice all for Christ receive a hundred-fold more in this world, as well as life everlasting in the world to come. But there is something more than all this in the results of the holy communion. Not only does God reward his faithful servants, but he confers special honor on this, the most important and solemn ordinance of his Church. It is a great festival in honor of his Son. We know that kings and great ones of the earth are wont, upon the birth-day or marriage of the eldest son, to pardon criminals and let them out of prison, to make presents to their friends, and to distribute food and clothing to the poor. In like manner, God is accustomed to bestow special honor upon the commemoration by believers of the death of his only-begotten Son. More than at other times does he set imprisoned souls free, comfort the poor, and feed with spiritual food

those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. The entire scene is calculated to bring Christians into the most favorable position to receive the divine blessing. They are presumed to be earnest, humble, penitent, trustful, thoughtful. The circumstances do of themselves impress upon pious souls the deepest lessons.

I have spoken of these functions of the communion—how effectively it shows forth the divine mercy, the sinner's guilt, the Redeemer's atonement, our constant dependence upon him, our intimate union with him, our fellowship with the brethren. Now it is in the midst of such views and exercises, when self is annihilated, and Christ overshadows us, and dwells upon all our senses and all our spirits like a solemn presence, that we are in the most favorable condition to receive the divine blessing. God brings us into this attitude meaning to bless us, and it may safely be affirmed that those who come in a right spirit to this feast of fat things never go away unprofited. If they are not quite insensible and thoughtless, they carry away deeper convictions of man's helplessness, clearer views of Christ's offices, of his power and willingness to save, more affecting sentiments in regard to the divine love and condescension, heavenly aspirations, fresh resolutions, and holy purposes. These constitute growth in grace, and prepare us for every good word and work. They are changes wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, sealing to the willing soul what is so freely offered and vividly shadowed forth in the emblems. It is because of such experiences that this becomes the day of days to so many Christians. These sacraments are way-marks in their heavenward career. On such occasions they come to realize what was before only seen in the dim distance. That is actualized to them which before was only a theory; and they rejoicingly refer to these festive hours as to so many mounts of vision, from which they looked off upon the land of promise, and had bright glimpses of heaven. And thus it is that a day

in God's court is better than a thousand, and they go forth strengthened with wine as a giant to run his race.

Of qualifications for this holy rite, I know of none that are essential but a reverent, loyal, trustful spirit toward Christ, and a sincere desire to obtain grace, through this and other means, to lead a holy and godly life.

IX.

CHRISTIANS CO-WORKERS WITH GOD.

We are laborers together with God.—1 Cor., iii., 9.

It was, perhaps, no wonder that the Christians to whom our text was addressed had fallen into a shallow but mischievous controversy in regard to their spiritual teachers. This entire epistle demonstrates the crudeness of their ideas in regard to religious doctrine as well as morals. These erring, inexperienced disciples were already busy in dividing the infant Church into sects, of which some claimed Paul, and some Apollos, and others, it seems, claimed Christ for their head. Their error lay in forgetting that the ministers through whom they had believed were only inferior instruments in the business of their conversion, and that the great, efficient agent was God. All others were to be esteemed as only humble auxiliaries in the accomplishment of a work, of which the profitable issue had resulted from the Divine energy alone. "Neither he that planteth is any thing, nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase." This is obviously the correct method of estimating the comparative importance of the divine and human agency involved in the work of the Christian ministry. The frail instrument is nothing. All human efforts combined—the apostolic authority, the deep learning, and restless energy of Paul—the stirring eloquence and skillful logic of Apollos, fell infinitely short

of the conversion of a soul. The power of God is the one element of efficiency that gives to the evangelizing movement all its success.

I. The function of the ministry is, however, an important part of the divine plan; for "how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard, and how can they hear without a preacher?" Man can, indeed, accomplish nothing without God, but God has chosen to consummate nothing in the work of religion without human co-operation. Immeasurably inferior as is the part we are called to sustain, it has yet been made indispensable to the result. "*We are laborers together with God.*"

1. This co-operation of divine energy and human endeavor finds place in all the movements of life. Such a concurrence is observable even in the involuntary activities put forth by the human animal at its first entrance upon its earthly being, and in those which constitute its last demonstrations of vitality. The several organs employed in respiration and digestion, with their various powers; the adaptations of air and food to minister to the wants of life, as well as all the other influences under which the human machine begins its movements, are all manifestly the handiwork of the Almighty. Nothing is ours but the slight effort, if effort it may be called, which we involuntarily lend to the mysterious process.

In the various occupations which engage and sustain the life of man, this concurrence of divine and human effort is yet more clearly manifest. The earth, with its various properties and adaptations favorable to the growth of food for human sustenance, the kindly seasons, the former and the latter rains, the alternations of sunshine, and clouds, and dews, are the free gift and bountiful provision of Heaven; and yet all will prove of little worth without the interposition of a diligent, painstaking agriculture. The plow and all the other implements of rural labor must be incessantly plied, the good seed must be sown in its season, and all the laws

and conditions of seed-time and harvest be duly fufilled, or there will be no increase.

Every pursuit and every branch of business, every department of study and science illustrate this pervading principle of the harmonious working and co-operation of divine and human agencies. The mariner guides his rolling bark with unerring skill over stormy seas, certainly one of the most astonishing achievements of human labor and science; yet a wiser and mightier than he planted the forests and formed the mines from which the materials of this wonderful structure were drawn. He spread out the deep on which it rides so triumphantly, and is the source of power, whether of air or vapor, which gives to its flight such matchless vigor and rapidity. Should He forbid the unerring mag net to point to the pole, or permit the winds to escape from his control, or the world of waters to violate the laws impressed upon them by the Divine hand, then the proud ship would drift a prey to the fickle waves and gales, or be swept to ruin by the maddened storm, or buried in the profound abyss. The voice that says to the proud wave, "Peace," and to the winds, "Be still," and to the terraqueous earth, "Stand fast," is the voice of God. The most cunning or complicated contrivances and operations of men do one and all obey his universal law. God is the great, but often the unperceived actor; man is the humble, though frequently the conspicuous, noisy auxiliary. If the divine agency is removed far from common eyes by the multitude of human devices, it is on that account none the less real and controlling. It dwells in the basis and fundamental cause of all actions and achievements.

2. We are laborers together with God, specially and eminently, in working out our own salvation, and in all the duties and achievements of personal religion. Whenever man accomplishes any thing, it is in co-operation with his Maker, in obedience to a law that is often concealed, and in corre-

spondence with agencies usually latent, but in the most deeply interesting of all our pursuits—that of saving the soul, the co-operation is distinctly avowed, and consciously recognized and relied upon. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure," is a revealed, divine theory to guide us in all our plans and efforts in a career of practical piety. Men idly declaim about the inefficiency of human efforts, as if it were presumptuous and sinful to receive the clear teaching of the Bible on this subject; or rashly postpone the business of religion, as if, whenever disposed to enter upon it, they could manage it all in their own strength and their own way; yet is the outward work vain, unless God work within. We must be laborers together with Him, if we would not beat the air. He has imparted to us our moral powers and our religious susceptibilities. He has delivered up his Son to make propitiation for our sins, and to reconcile us to God. He has manifested the light, the truth, and the way. He gives the Holy Spirit, and supplies all providential opportunities and facilities, whether of pious parentage, religious training, favorable examples and associations, or Christian ordinances and privileges. So much is done independently of the sinner, and here will the matter end, unless the sinner shall choose to co-operate with so many benignant, saving agencies. To render these effectual to salvation, he must seek and use the helps offered—must pray, believe, and obey—must employ all his powers and opportunities diligently and conscientiously. We must be laborers together with God, who will not, and, under the Gospel economy, can not complete the work without us.

This great practical truth, which so manifestly presides over the commencement and growth of the interior, spiritual life, finds effective illustration in the whole career of Christian duties, of which the right performance constitutes our probation as moral beings. It is, perhaps, for the promotion

of our moral improvement that God is pleased to leave the carrying out of his beneficent designs to the zealous voluntary co-operation of his people. His bounty has lavished upon the world the most ample means for the satisfaction of all its wants and the alleviation of all its sufferings. Silver and gold, food and raiment, healing plants, healthful breezes, charming scenery, and prolific fields, with parental providence and divine profusion, hath God prepared for all the sufferers and outcasts under whom the whole creation "groaneth and travaileth in pain until now." All of this munificent outlay for the relief of human wants has the Divine compassion provided; but it is left to the liberal and benevolent to make distribution of it. The completion of this enterprise of the divine mercy God devolves upon the zeal and faithfulness of his people. The poor will be none the better for this profuse supply of bread; the sick and the bruised none the better for the balm of Gilead; the homeless none the better for the wide, prolific domain which God has spread out for their nurture and habitation, till they who are intrusted with wealth, and power, and sympathy, shall become "laborers together with God."

3. Our neglected duties offer us another illustration of this great fundamental law of Christian effort. Divine Providence has committed to the faithfulness of the Church an innumerable host of untrained immortal beings. God has made them capable of the enjoyments, the virtues, and the occupations of holy spirits above. They have been redeemed by the blood of Christ. They have the promise of the Holy Spirit. The revealed word has lessons of unspeakable value and efficacy adapted to their wants. Yet are these candidates for immortal bliss or woe destitute of all Christian qualifications and hopes. They can not even read the divine word which is able to make them wise unto salvation. They are untaught, unconverted, unsanctified, and will, beyond all doubt, grow up in sin, and sink into ruin, if left to

themselves. And just here it is that God, with all his bowels of compassion, stops, waiting to see what his people will do in a case so urgent. They are his dependence and auxiliaries; and, if they do not interpose and perform the part assigned them, it had been better for these embryo seraphs never to have been born. Not only will holiness and heaven be forever lost to them, but incalculable evils will befall them. They will suffer banishment from all pure, high associations, and share the deplorable doom of "the devil and his angels."

Hardly less responsible is our relation to the unevangelized races, and infancy itself has not a dependence more absolute upon our sympathy and our fidelity to Christian principle. For them, as well as for us, salvation has been provided by the blood of the cross. The Gospel freely recognizes them as beneficiaries of its grace and claimants on its bounty. For them heavenly mansions were provided before the foundations of the world; and in their behalf it was enjoined upon all true followers of Jesus to "go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." And so the matter stands, and has stood since the crucifixion. So it will stand till the day of judgment. God has done his part in the work, and waits for the co-operation of the Church. His plan is fully developed. He does not design to modify it, or add to it any new element of efficiency. There is already the blood of Christ, and the divine word, and the Holy Spirit—and there are the dying souls. Who shall bear to them the good tidings of salvation? What healer shall pour into their bruised spirits the oil and the wine? No messengers of mercy are provided besides the people whom Christ has already sprinkled from an evil conscience. They are appointed to be "laborers together with him." This is the Gospel theory.

II. So the doctrine of our text holds true, and finds proof, as well as palpable illustration, in common life no less than in

religion. Both divine and human agencies are concerned in all our achievements—in all human pursuits—in mechanical and agricultural labors—in mercantile and scientific enterprises. Yet more obvious and striking is their co-operation in every sphere of Christian activity—in the conversion and sanctification of individuals, in the religious training of children, in all works of mercy and charity, and in the propagation of the Gospel. This extended exposition of a principle so frankly recognized by both natural and revealed religion, and not questioned, that I am aware of, in any quarter, will find its apology in the great practical importance of the inferences which I now proceed to deduce.

1. It must obviously be the fundamental law of this co-partnership between the infinitely wise, almighty God, and his frail, erring creatures, that He shall prescribe the terms and impose all the conditions. The language in which this proposition is announced must carry with it the force of demonstration to every intelligent mind. In the one party there are infinite intelligence, and goodness, and power; in the other, weakness, and ignorance, and sin, and helpless, absolute dependence, not only for life and its blessings, but for the faculties and resources which are now invited into co-operation with the great Giver and Benefactor. It follows as a matter of clear equity and manifest propriety, and even of inevitable necessity, that there can be no equality or community of rights and authority between parties so related. In thus condescending to admit us as co-laborers in the great field of evangelical enterprise, God does not abate any thing from his prerogatives of undivided, incommunicable sovereignty. He has originated and proclaimed the principles on which the enterprise is to be conducted, and it is the business of his humble fellow-laborers cordially to receive and diligently to obey "every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

2. It is plain, also, that our successes in the Christian life must be proportioned to the integrity and earnest zeal with

which this condition is fulfilled. As the employments of life prosper in proportion as agricultural, mechanical, and scientific skill adapt their efforts and appliances to the unchangeable laws of the material world, so our Christian enterprises must recognize all the pre-established principles and conditions of the Gospel economy. He who sows his seed upon a rock, or in winter, or turns his struggling prow into the eye of the tempest, or casts firebrands into a powder-magazine, is not guilty of more egregious folly than the man who hopes to become a Christian, and successfully to work out his salvation, without a cordial reception of the conditions and doctrines of the Gospel. The only reason why we are less struck with his absurdity is to be found in the less palpable nature of the moral discomfiture. The fatuity of the farmer, the sailor, and the artisan, who contemn nature's laws, is speedily made manifest to all the world by empty garners, and dismal shipwreck, and a thunder-toned catastrophe; while the religious driveler may go through life in his delusion, and only become aware of his blunder at the very gate of lost heaven, when he knocks there in all the confidence of a martyr, crying aloud, "Lord, Lord, open unto me!"

3. The comparison just now dismissed suggests another idea, very material in this discussion. The truths of the Gospel which the figurative language of our text allows us to denominate *conditions of the partnership*, in accordance with which "we are laborers together with God," are to be received by us *on authority*. They differ, in this respect, from another class of truths and principles, which are disclosed by the material universe. These, no less than the doctrines of revelation, are God's truth, but they are discovered by observation and experience, and so come to us with sensible evidence, which likens them to other changes and facts that make up our conscious history. I will not deny that some religious truths commend themselves to the understanding in a similar way, and that some doctrines of pure

revelation so enter into our experience and our hearts as by-and-by to be clothed with the additional authority of sensible and experimental evidence. This, however, is not the general character of the truths of revealed religion; and it is just because these are not discoverable by natural means that they have been revealed to us. The disclosures of the Gospel do not, as a general thing, appertain to the domain of reason and observation. They belong to that higher sphere, where God alone is the discoverer, and faith alone is able to exercise cognizance. It has been claimed, I think with justice, that the constitutional sinfulness and actual guilt of man may disclose themselves to his unaided consciousness. It has also been held, but manifestly on very inferior evidence, that the soul's immortality was a discovery precedent to revelation. The moment, however, we proceed beyond these elementary truths, we must look for another guide. Reason can not tell us, and nothing but revelation can, how God stands affected toward the sinner; whether repentance and reformation are sufficient to restore the guilty to His favor, or whether He will exact some atonement, or execute some penalty. What is to be the condition of the wicked in a future state —what the kind, degree, and duration of their penalties or pains—none but God can inform us. The same is true in regard to what constitutes acceptable piety—what moral changes will fit a sinful mortal for heaven—by what agency effected—by what friendly mediation and interference they are to be brought near us—what shall be the occupations and enjoyments of upright souls in heaven. We know nothing, and can know nothing, but what is revealed to us, in regard to the nature, vocation, and destiny of angels, good and evil; nothing of the nature, office, and dignity of the Holy Spirit; nothing of the character, power, functions, and glory of the Savior; nothing of his relations to God, the Maker of all things, or to us, whom he came to save. All of these truths, and they constitute the sum of the Gospel, are mani-

festly above the reach of human reasoning. They belong exclusively to the region of revelation, and they are to be implicitly received, on the authority of the great Revealer, by all who aspire to be "laborers together with Him." To reject this light is to doom ourselves to a starless, endless night. To spurn away this guide is a flat rejection of Christianity.

This implicit trust in the word of God is what is so often set forth in the New Testament as the one comprehensive duty of the Christian, as including his entire function and work as a laborer together with God. The entire joint operation, so far as personal salvation is concerned, is thus set forth in 2 Thess., ii., 13: "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through the sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." The Gospel is here epitomized, and the two great concurring forces concerned in the salvation of a soul announced in one pithy sentence—divine influences, and a strong, loving, working faith. It is thus we are laborers together with God.

Does our doctrine throw dishonor upon the human understanding, and prescribe a blind, stupid credulity as the Gospel's great panacea? So far from this, it puts every earnest, ingenuous inquirer upon the strenuous task of searching out the truth as it is in Jesus. At the peril of our souls we must know the prescribed conditions under which we are called to "work out our salvation through God, who worketh in us to will and to do of his good pleasure." It will not do to float along with the current, and submit questions of so profound and intense interest to idle tradition, or human authority, or Church pretensions, any more than to the rash temerity of our own reason. "We are laborers together with God," and we want to know, and we *must* know, or die in our sins, what conditions he imposes upon the joint operation. I by no means satisfy the demands of so high an obligation by ascertaining what is the current or popular opin-

ion, or what is the voice of the fathers. I may not trust to a multitude, nor to venerable antiquity, for my business is to learn what is the mind of God. His own account of the matter is in my hands, and there I must search for his doctrine, armed with whatever resources diligent, thoughtful, prayerful study, and good books, and learned, simple-hearted, God-fearing teachers may be able to supply. I specially desire not to be misunderstood on this most important point. The Gospel not only tolerates—it imperatively demands of every Christian that he should seek diligently to know the true import of the Bible; but its reverent Spirit withholds him from all rash, profane pretensions to sit in judgment upon the wisdom or fitness of its revelations.

Our religious movements must all harmonize with the laws of mind which the sovereign will of God has established, and which all who co-operate with him in this great enterprise must respect no less than the sacred oracles. They constitute unchangeable conditions, to neglect which insures discomfiture in all Christian enterprises. Our text and its discussion sufficiently indicate the agencies and instrumentalities which may be employed for the promotion of religion. It tolerates none but *moral forces*, addressed to the *will* and the *conscience*.

Persecution, in all its forms and degrees, is a gross violation of this fundamental principle. Compulsion and intimidation can not produce conviction, and can not, therefore, promote piety, though they can hypocrisy.

There may be a social persecution, which has no power of pains and penalties, but which may yet inflict serious evils in the shape of neglects and mortifications, or may offer bribes for conformity in the way of attentions and compliments. Men have sometimes been deterred from acting honestly in the choice of their Church through the fear of pecuniary injury. Countenance and patronage in business, loans, banking facilities, are sometimes tendered or denied for sectarian, though

nominally for religious ends. These are approved and not untried methods of making hypocrites, but they can not advance the interests of religion. All attempts to promote sect by claims of superior influence, or respectability, or wealth, or learning, by high pretensions of any sort not connected with truth and righteousness, are sins against the first principles of the Gospel, and ought to brand with suspicion and dishonor all who resort to such corrupting expedients.

For the same reason, the admission of any other than pure, Christian motives into our religion—any self-seeking—any shrinking from the cares or sacrifices which obedience to religious convictions would impose, is likely to prove fatal to Christian character—becomes an element of weakness and corruption utterly incompatible with sound piety and growth in grace. It is a grievous offense against the Gospel, which God will in some form avenge.

Divine Providence has imposed upon the American Churches a duty unknown to the Christianity of other lands. The old hemisphere has poured out upon our shores two millions of the most ignorant and superstitious people who any where bear the Christian name. God has sent them hither that they may be made partakers of our pure saving faith. Until recently, we and our fathers have slept over our task unconsciously. It is now some ten years since the first serious attempt was made to rouse our churches to their high duty, and to the imminent danger of neglecting it. Much Christian zeal and effort have been awakened, and liberal expenditures of money and exertion incurred. I express my deliberate opinion, that during these ten years no valuable prog ress has been made in this massive, urgent Christian enter prise, and that we have done little more than multiply obstacles to future success. We have, to be sure, succeeded in rousing ourselves to a highly conservative indignation against the encroachments of Romanism, but our efforts have, mean-

time, had the effect of provoking against us the strongest prejudices and instincts of our Roman Catholic population. The power of the priest over his erring followers has been strengthened three-fold, and the people who, at the commencement of the movement, were disorganized, as sheep without a shepherd, and so in a condition highly favorable to evangelizing labors, are now marshaled into a phalanx impenetrable at least to such methods of aggression as have hitherto been employed. Is it premature to suspect the wisdom of a policy which has met with a failure so signal and universal? Have we sufficiently considered the conditions under which this and all other Christian enterprises are to be conducted? We have had for our object to convince human beings of like infirmities and tendencies with ourselves of their errors, and to bring them into harmony with our opinions and sentiments. We have sought to accomplish these ends by a violent assault upon their prejudices—by rousing against ourselves and our mission their strong passions and bitter enmity. It was our proper business, in all meekness, and long-suffering, and charity, to direct these erring souls to a crucified Savior, and we have done little else than stun their ears with loud denunciations of Pope, Jesuits, and priests, all leagued together for the subversion of our liberties. In a word, as "laborers together with God," we were provided with spiritual weapons mighty to the pulling down of these strong-holds of sin, but we have chosen to draw nothing from Heaven's armory but its thunder-bolts. It will probably require an age to retrieve these grievous errors. Our progress has all been in the wrong direction, and it is high time to retrace our steps, and to begin anew this indispensable work. These men are to be converted, if at all, in the usual way—by the truth as it is in Jesus, spoken in love. We must deserve their confidence and secure it. We must approach them in the spirit of kindness and affection. We must dismiss from our rhetoric such gaudy, dazzling figures as "the

beast," "the man of sin," "the lady in scarlet," and content ourselves with arguments and ornaments better adapted to move and win the heart. If this method, the old, well-tested method of the Gospel, will not succeed, no other will. No soul was ever yet converted by harshness, contempt, and denunciations. It is time we should come up to our brother's heart as touched, like our merciful High-priest, with a feeling of his infirmities. If our own piety is sound and healthful, it has nothing to fear from this contact with error. We shall not take the plague because alarmists proclaim the region infected. If God, the great Master-workman, is with us, we shall pass through hotter fires unscathed. We may breathe new life into these dry bones. We may achieve victories which the greatness of our errors and the littleness of our faith have led us to regard as hopeless or impossible.

4. The interests of personal piety are chiefly concerned in a wise and unreserved co-operation with the principles and movements of the divine overtures and agency proffered to us. But if we are "laborers together with God," we have also many *fellow-laborers* of our own fallen race, our relations with whom are likely to exert a very important influence upon our comfort and usefulness in the career of activities to which we are appointed. The efficiency of the great Christian movement depends, more than on any other cause, upon the union and charity that pervade the Church, and insure the harmonious action of its members. Their mutual love and confidence constitute moral forces, much relied on in the Gospel; and he is not a wise friend to religion who does not look out upon all the followers of a common Lord with a strong bias toward the most comprehensive catholicity. A problem is here presented which has been found of no easy solution. The stringent law, which binds us to render an absolute homage to God's word in matters of doctrine and morals, tolerates no easy fellowship with careless heterodoxy; while all experience demonstrates that we may not

expect any thing like unanimity of opinion even among truly religious people. It seems nearly certain that some good men will be excluded from our fellowship, even under the largest exercise of charity compatible with fidelity to the truth; but the best interests of religion require that we do not make a Moloch of our orthodoxy. We should construe the law that binds us cautiously and tenderly, when it proposes the exclusion from our charity and co-operation of those who claim to be servants of our common Lord, and to be as we are, "laborers together with God."

Under the most liberal construction of our religious obligations, I suppose we could not recognize the Christianity of those who do not acknowledge the divine authority of the New Testament. This test does not require that they agree with us precisely in our theory of inspiration or our doctrinal exegesis; but it does require of all who claim to be Christians that they recognize the Bible as the word of God and of divine authority, as containing the true doctrine and plan of salvation promulgated by Jesus Christ. A faith less comprehensive than this carries with it, as it seems to me, an absolute forfeiture of the Christian character. To hold the Bible to be a mere human production, of no more authority than Cicero's Offices, only as it may happen to correspond more extensively with our notions of right, or with our preconceived opinions, is not to regard it as the standard and source of religious truth. Between us and such claimants upon the Christian name there is no common ground to occupy, no basis, no common authority. Our religion is a faith and a power, of which Christ is the author and the Bible the divine oracle—theirs, a fancy piece of patchwork, that rejoices in a Christian name, but really does homage to self, personified as Reason, rather than to Jehovah.

I think, too, it will be allowed that there are certain fundamental ideas in the Christian system, the rejection of which is tantamount to discarding the Gospel. For instance, the

soul's immortality and accountability — the last judgment, and consequent rewards and punishments adapted to the soul's character and deserts—the insufficiency of natural religion—our need of a moral renovation, and the consequent necessity of divine light and influence, seem to me to be doctrines so fundamental to the Gospel, that the system can not subsist without them. I am far from being disposed to burden this creed, for the direction of my charity, with all the articles which my faith reverently and cordially embraces; but there are, beyond all controversy, *essential* doctrines in the Gospel, without whose agency it has no power to make men wise unto salvation. I will abstain, however, from extending this enumeration. Brief as it is, it possibly contains some dogmas not essential to the production of effective vital piety. Could we determine what are the doctrines indispensable to the soul's conversion — what the theoretical errors that neutralize the power of the Gospel and vitiate a system of faith, the question under consideration would obviously be simplified and divested of its chief difficulties. I acknowledge myself bound to recognize the Christianity of all who adopt the Gospel as their divine authoritative standard of doctrine, and so preach it as to produce among their adherents the fruits of evangelical piety. I may still have strong objections to their creed; but in the presence of such a demonstration, I can no longer feel myself at liberty to question the legitimacy of their claim upon my Christian confidence. I can not resist the fact that Christ accepts them, nor decline fraternal relations and co-operation with those who are so manifestly "laborers together with God."

There is great comfort in knowing that this practical test is the one prescribed to us by our great lawgiver: "By their fruits ye shall know them." We may forbid and reject none who really cast out devils in the name of Jesus. We might only plunge ourselves into endless distressing doubts in vain attempts to ascertain the piety of others, and our consequent

duties toward them by drawing metaphysical inferences from their religious opinions. When the truth rejected or the error embraced is so fundamental as manifestly to vitiate personal piety, the question may be easily solved; but if it only interferes with theoretical orthodoxy, while it is found in experience no way incompatible with the sanctification of the heart and the life, then we must pause before we can honor our own abstractions above the demonstrations of the Spirit of God. Truths there no doubt are essential to the integrity of the Gospel—fundamental, momentous truths, in the absence of which the system has no longer any elements of sufficient potency to transform the fallen soul, and fit it for heaven. So no doubt there are fatal errors, whose presence may neutralize the truths associated with them, and so render the whole religious movement a practical nullity, but which precisely are these tremendous agents for good or evil it is not always easy to determine. Some errors, we know, are not fatal, though all are to be deplored and discarded. There are truths, also, which may be of great value and importance in the Christian system, without being absolutely essential to its efficacy as a saving ordinance. Who can satisfy his own mind in regard to the questions here suggested? Who can satisfy other minds? In compassion on our helpless embarrassment, the Savior has supplied a practical solution of the difficulty; and where revelation no longer serves as an infallible guide, it refers us to observation and experience. We properly infer character from creeds till we reach a point where *à priori* reasonings are perilous and inapplicable, and there we are called upon to transpose the terms of the argument, and modify our opinion of the creed by an analysis of the character which has grown up under it.

I can not doubt that Christ designed for this practical test a higher authority and a wider sphere than have yet been conceded to it. We have hitherto chosen rather to trust our metaphysics than our eyes and our hearts in forming our

judgments of the Christian character of those who "follow not with us." In spite, however, of perverse theories, there is always an under-current in the Church, setting strongly in the right direction, mitigating the bitterness of sect, and relaxing the stringency of orthodox abstractions. I remember well when two important religious denominations, which are now prospering side by side through all the land, and growing, I trust, in mutual confidence, believed and proclaimed each other nearly destitute and incapable of evangelical piety, because of the high Calvinism embraced by the one, and the low Arminianism held by the other. Those were days of fierce controversy, and rebuke, and recrimination. In the progress of time, the combatants grew weary, or the spectators became indifferent, and the polemic strife abated. While the panting champions still lingered on the borders of the field, all grim in their armor, or kept watch ready to sally forth from their frowning castles, the simple Christianity of either party took advantage of the lull to follow their honest business, and prosecute the enterprises of piety and mercy to which their hearts inclined them. Manifestation was made of the tendency and strength of their principles, and of the influence of their errors, whatever they were, upon character and Christian development. While it can not be affirmed that this experiment has resulted in the removal of all prejudices, and the harmony of all differences, it will be admitted, I am sure, on all hands, that a very desirable progress has been made. Few, it is believed, of either party would now deny to their opponents the possession of substantial, creditable piety; and, conceding this, they are clearly precluded from a return to the position whence the expiring controversies were commenced. With such evidence that God has accepted our neighbor, with all his doctrinal errors, we can no longer feel at liberty to reject him. The old metaphysical reasons of prudence or of sect will no longer justify demarkation and exclusion in the face of this divine passport to our Christian regards.

I readily persuade myself that the admission of the practical test under discussion to a freer play, and to its legitimate influences, to which there is always a strong tendency in the absence of controversy, is destined to enlarge the circle of Christian charity to a degree of which the foremost in this cardinal virtue have now no anticipation. This will be the first triumph of a great principle, too little heeded by all the churches, but indispensable to a large and graceful catholicity. Besides the good office of fostering Christian charity, it has another function to fulfill. It will go far to assign their proper place and importance to the controverted dogmas of the churches. This class of opinions is controverted chiefly because they lack the support of unequivocal, undisputed Scripture testimony — a circumstance which very properly consigns them to the practical test offered to our inspection in their actual results. "By their fruits ye shall know them;" and the good day is surely near at hand when opinions, however erroneous, which do not prove obstructive of fervent, fruitful piety, will no longer be allowed to obstruct charity and Christian fellowship. Hitherto the application of this test to our creeds has been forced upon us by the spontaneous working of our piety. It is time that we should voluntarily subject our controversies to it, and learn the mind of God in regard to the differences which disturb our peace and impede our usefulness. We have followed the *à priori* argument till our vision is dimmed and charity dismayed. Let us now, in all humility, change the order of the logical procedure, and interrogate the results of causes about which we have so mystified ourselves and others.

Besides those questions resting on doubtful or disputed Scripture testimony to which this test is applicable, several others, of no little practical moment, seem to have been designedly left to this method of proof. Revelation keeps silence when Reason and Experience are sufficient guides. Many things having reference to the outward form, econo-

my, and agencies of the Church are confessedly left unsettled by the Holy Scriptures, and we are at liberty to adopt such measures and methods as observation and experience may show to be fittest for us under existing circumstances. With all respect for those who profess to find in the Bible a satisfactory solution of all questions about the organization, officers, and government of the Church, and the ordinances and ministries of Christianity, I can not avoid the conviction that many of these points were designedly left to be adjusted by the varying circumstances and wants of the Church. With this conviction, I am at liberty to believe, as I do most confidently, that those exterior arrangements through which the Gospel seeks to fulfill its mission most nearly conform to the divine will which most effectually promote the salvation of men—that what is best for us may have been less adapted to our fathers, and may be yet less adapted to the wants of posterity—that forms and modes may change with time, or climate, or political institutions, or the progress of knowledge and civilization—may change without harm, so long as the truth and power which they are appointed to exert or symbolize are duly protected. How many hoary controversies would find their quietus in the general admission of such a principle! How will peace on earth and good will to men be multiplied when all who profess to be "laborers together with God" shall agree in submitting all theoretical and practical differences, not authoritatively settled by the Bible, to such an ordeal as he has ordained, and in regarding plans and principles that work equally well as equally acceptable to the great Head of the Church!

III. My task will be finished when two or three deductions fit for use in the Christian life shall embody the results of this discussion in a form convenient for the memory and the conscience.

1. The first want of our Christianity is a clearer recognition and a more perfect realization of God's actual presence and

agency in all its conceptions and enterprises. Its greatest danger lurks, on the one hand, in a philosophizing, hard orthodoxy; on the other, in a sensuous, fastidious liberalism—the first insensibly losing, the last frankly discarding from its system the in-dwelling, co-working divinity. Meantime every truly Christian aspiration that is felt among us cries aloud for the living God. Our helpless human nature turns away dissatisfied and disheartened from a religion which has no divine manifestation to stir the soul and justify its hopes. Of philosophies and cosmogonies it has enough or can make more, but it longs for a divine presence, and will not endure the terrific solitude of a clime in which there is no God. In its desperate efforts to supply a want so intolerable, it creates divinities. The Israelites substituted a golden calf for Jehovah before he had been forty days withdrawn from their camp. It was not enough that they beheld the dark symbols of His presence on the dim, distant mountain top. They would see the cloud and the pillar of fire dwelling in the midst of them. Natural religion, in all its aberrations, ever manifests its longings after divine manifestations, that may make known, at least to the fears of men, the power and majesty of Heaven. Hence it forms monsters hideous to the sight—Molochs to drink the blood of childhood—Juggernauts to be appeased by martyrdoms or self-immolations. The universal tendency is developed, though in less exaggerated forms, under the Christian dispensation. It is this that, in the absence or denial of the transforming energies of the Holy Ghost, deifies popes, and hierarchies, and ordinances. It invests symbols and ceremonies with divine attributes, and worships the wafer it has transformed into a crucified Savior. Or, with an impiety yet more daring as well as absurd, because it will not recognize God in revelation, and in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, it deifies man and the universe, making all things, living and brute, divine, that it may reject the one only divinity.

While we lament these deplorable errors, let us receive their lessons of instruction. They are spontaneous efforts, put forth by those who have lost God out of their Christianity, to save themselves from stark Atheism. "We are laborers together with God." *He* is the great worker as well as lawgiver. "He works in us to will and to do of his good pleasure." "Ye are God's husbandry—ye are God's building." Open your hearts genially to receive this great doctrine. Do not seek to manacle, or mutilate, or transmute it. Do not dissolve it into air as an Oriental hyperbole, but embrace it reverently and frankly as a fact, and as the great fact of practical, experimental religion. It is the great resource of the Church. Come hither for safety and strength, for shield and sword. Let the preacher in his closet feel the eye that seeth in secret, and in the pulpit lean upon the Savior, who is "with him always to the end of the world." Let the devout assembly recognize, with a lively faith, the presence and communion of Him who is "in the midst of them." Let the weary soul cry aloud for the Comforter, and the doubting for the "Spirit that beareth witness with our spirit" that we are the children of God. Honor the potency of prayer and of faith, and doubt not they will have power with the Highest. Carry into your family devotions, to your sacraments, and to your Sunday-school an absorbing, sleepless conviction that God is the chief worker, and you only a "laborer together with him." Ever visit this house of prayer crying from the depths of the heart, Come, Lord, speedily into thy temple. Let your swelling, struggling heart "break for the longing it hath for God—for the living God."

2. Having established ourselves upon this immovable foundation, that God is the one efficient power and agent in the work of religion, we may safely contemplate our own duties. We may call out the energies of the Church to a strenuous co-operation with him who "worketh in us to will and to do of his good pleasure," without any dread of having it

imputed to us that we ascribe the Creator's honor to the creature. This is the theory which offers the highest encouragements to the most earnest and valiant outlay of mortal energies. In partnership with these divine resources, we labor with hope and assurance of success. Never does the artificer toil with such diligence and spirit as when, having secured the co-operation of some powerful natural agent, he subjects to its resistless force the tasks that would only mock his own puny strength. The mariner is ready to put forth a preternatural energy when favoring breezes invite him to spread out his swelling sail to its fullest capacity. One often hears it announced as a sage evangelical aphorism, that we ought to trust in God, as if salvation depended only on him, and work as if the matter depended wholly on our own diligence. I think the second member of this antithesis will bear a little more straining. We ought rather to work with strained sinews and bounding hearts, as seeing Jehovah always at our right hand with proffers of his omnipotence in any emergency. We ought rather to rush on shouting to the onset, knowing that Christ our Captain hath girded on his sword, and gone forth conquering and to conquer. We are anointed with divine strength, and clad *cap-à-pie* in charmed armor. We have only to strike like men to win palms of victory and crowns of glory. These are the conditions under which we are called upon to become "laborers together with God;" and by all that there is of divine condescension and compassion in such a calling is every man of us pledged to dedicate himself, soul and body, unto God in all services, sacrifices, and sufferings, with the devotion of a martyr and the courage of a hero. Oh! it is grievous to think what might ere this have been accomplished for the salvation of the world, had the Church a mind to work. There is not an unconverted sinner in all our Christian congregations but might have been saved, and may this day be saved, on condition of a hearty co-operation with God. There is not a pa-

gan tribe so far away from the warm zone of Gospel grace but it might have been evangelized long since, had the churches but exerted the energies, divine and human, placed at their disposal. Sometimes the Church slumbers on a century or a generation, under the poor pretense of paying a compliment to God's sovereignty—as if obedience to a plain command were not better, at least, than *such* a sacrifice. Again it will work on its own account, as if it had no longer any need of the old copartnership. Just think, brethren, that through all of these ages, the divine resources to be put in requisition for the world's conversion have been in impatient readiness—that Jehovah has stretched out his hands all the day long to a disobedient and even a gainsaying people—that teeming spiritual influences linger all about us, waiting, not for God, but for us his fellow-laborers—ready, when the sphere of our Christian benevolence shall have stretched itself around the globe, to rush over the electric circle, and quicken China and the Islands of the Sea into spiritual life; and yet we wait and wait.

3. Finally, there is a power to be wielded by us for the promotion of piety, resulting from the co-operation of divine and human forces, already dwelt upon at sufficient length. It is the influence of Christian character. This is partly dependent upon positive efforts, and we increase its general efficiency in proportion to our growth in grace and in Christian accomplishments; but I refer here to the aggressive, diffusive power, which the Gospel spontaneously puts forth when embodied and exemplified in a pure, graceful Christian life. For the manifestation of this power, and the transmission of this influence from the heart of the individual Christian and Church into the heart of other men and communities, a fervent, large-hearted charity is the only adequate medium. The better part of Christianity exists in the feelings, and is communicated by sympathy and sentiment. It is a leaven that silently diffuses itself, imparting its own properties and

tendencies till the whole lump is leavened, or till it is arrested by some uncongenial element. It is thus that the Gospel, when allowed to operate under the most favorable conditions, works its way through the family circle and by social and neighborhood ties. Every good man is perpetually *giving out* the light and grace that are in him for the illumination and salvation of those within his sphere, receiving, meantime, a good return in whatever lofty impulses or large views his brother may happen to excel. This is an inborn and characterizing tendency of religion, and able of itself, if unresisted, to work a mighty revolution in the condition of the churches. It would go far to soothe our heart-aches, and heal our dissensions, and mollify our orthodoxy, and rectify our heterodoxy, and give us good deliverance from many sectarian jealousies and superannuated controversies.

Such a play and circulation of Christian sympathies and graces would gradually divert the attention of the churches from all dogmas and forms unimportant to vital piety, and make common property of such truths and methods of operation as really impart power and efficiency to the Gospel. They would establish a *tendency* imperceptible at first, but real and permanent toward such a unity of faith and Christian life among all who sincerely look to Jesus for life and salvation, as all our direct efforts have hitherto failed to secure. Broad differences might long survive in our symbolical books and dogmatical theology, for good men do not lightly abandon even the empty forms for which their fathers contended or suffered reproach. This entire commonwealth would peril its blood in defense of Bunker's Hill and Dorchester Heights, should a few regiments of Red-coats profane their deserted lines, though no one is moved to choler by the advance of improvements that are gradually leveling these monuments of our fathers' prowess.

And now, brethren, having given to this subject such con-

sideration as the time and circumstances allow, I would fain make some suitable and special application of its teachings to the present occasion. Yet what better can I do than beseech you to give earnest heed to the reasonings and the admonitions which I have already presented? Or, rather, shall I invite you to abridge my sermon into a motto, to be inscribed over the door of this new house of worship—to be written on the breast-plate of the minister, and on the frontlet of every hearer who may hereafter bring their offerings to God within these consecrated walls? This is the sum of the whole matter. I announce my argument and my exhortation in two words—HOLINESS and USEFULNESS. "Be ye holy, for I am holy." "We are laborers together with God." You have here within the compass of a proverb the whole duty of redeemed man—the fundamental principle and the perfect development of Christianity, the soul and body of the Church. Holiness and Usefulness. Be these the theme of every sermon, and the burden of every prayer, that in this house shall be preached and offered in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let them be inculcated upon the tender mind of childhood and youth in your Sunday-school. Let them be much dwelt upon when they who fear the Lord speak one to another in the class-room.

I never see a new church edifice erected, and dedicated to God's service, without thinking how glorious a thing it would be if a new congregation could be formed on a truly Christian model; not chiefly in regard to its form of ecclesiastical polity, or to a faultless creed, or to the external seemliness of its devotions—things by no means unworthy of attention, or destitute of considerable influence on religious prosperity—but in the far higher regards of the deep piety of its members, and the entireness of their devotion to Christ's kingdom and glory. I have long since nearly despaired of seeing such a church in this dark world; yet I can see no insuperable obstacle, moral or physical, to its existence, and I am wholly

sure that its example and splendid successes would usher in a new era. A band of a hundred, or of fifty, or even of ten living Christians, strong in mutual affections and confidence, and entire in their devotedness to Christ and to the salvation of souls, would, I am confident, wield an amount of religious influence immeasurably greater than is usually exerted by our largest and most flourishing churches. As matters are too often managed, scarcely one in every four or five professors of religion ever attains to such elevation and maturity in piety as to be of much positive use to the cause, while all the rest require about as much effort on the part of the Church to keep them along as they contribute to the general movement. They are ever in bondage to first principles—to doubts, and fears, and temptations, and bad habits, and besetting sins—evils which believing, courageous souls should dispose of very speedily, that they may "go on to perfection." While the vast majority are forever at or about this point of tantalizing equipoise, wasting much and contributing nothing of the spiritual resources of the Church—exciting at least as much of fear as of hope in the mind of charity itself, the sounder portion usually contrive to misdirect and squander away their moral force upon trifles or in doing mischief. They glory in men or in sect more than in Christ and the truth. They thank God, and applaud themselves for being of a Church most distinguished for its stern orthodoxy, or its enlightened, large liberality—most venerable for its hoary antiquity, or most admirable for late improvements and new discoveries—most orderly or most zealous—most apostolic or most democratic. Or, diverging still farther from the proper line of Christian action, they strive to extend the jurisdiction of the Gospel over things secular, or moral, or economical, or even political, and exhaust the fervor of their zeal on objects, useful it may be in themselves, but never to be prosecuted under an ecclesiastical organization without infinite peril to the best interests of Christianity. Manifold and dear-bought ex-

perience has demonstrated, and is daily demonstrating, that while the Church is busying itself with this out-door work, the fire burns more dimly, or quite goes out, upon her own altars. She is no longer "the light of the world," or the light she gives is but the dim, cold coruscation of the iceberg, or the lurid glare of the incendiary's fires. "My kingdom is not of this world," says the adorable Savior, "else would my servants fight." Many of his servants do fight, and that with weapons as unspiritual and truly carnal as gunpowder or steel. They mingle in the strife of tongues—in the war of passions, and prejudices, and criminations. At this moment no inconsiderable portion of the best elements of power and efficiency belonging to the Christian Church is engaged in enterprises which have no more to do with the promotion of piety than the veriest dreams; and yet the zeal, the fervent spirit, the quick impulses, the burning eloquence of our young men, the potent sympathies of the female heart, are thus drawn away from their proper objects—away from objects not only dear, but dearest to the Savior. Now it is plain that we can not afford to spare these resources. The Church must call back her sons to their proper work. She must concentrate her rays, in order to produce clear light or intense heat.

If I might venture to use this occasion for giving my advice to this new congregation, which I suppose I am authorized to do, I would inculcate the importance of seeking God's blessing in the usual and recognized methods of the denomination to which they prefer to belong. He is the best Methodist, and, being a Methodist, I think the best Christian, who respects and follows fully our appointed methods of getting and doing good. He attends upon the public and the more private and social means of grace punctually and conscientiously. He is ever at his class, at the prayer-meeting, and at the love-feast. He approves of—he sustains the institutions, and forms, and usages of his own Church, very little

concerned if it should so happen that others do not altogether like them, and even see a grievous departure from the Scripture vocabulary in such words as class-leader, love-feast, &c. This is the way that *he* has chosen for serving God, and nothing valuable is likely to be done without following *some* way earnestly. If denominational attachments should be strong, sectarian prejudices can not be too weak or too few; and I should rejoice to know that never a word is said in this or any other Methodist pulpit to excite or strengthen them. Our doctrines are none of them favorable to bigotry, and we are *con amore* bigots, if we are bigots at all. At peace with others, and in harmony with its own order and institutions, a church at liberty to engage fully in its proper work, its means of success will bear a very exact proportion to its piety. The machine is perfect, wanting nothing, when every member is both pure and active. The ideal of a Christian church militant is then fully satisfied. Then we truly live unto Christ. We eat and drink, we work and give, to his glory. We are the light of the world, and our influence will extend far, and be effective, according to the gauge of internal godliness and external manifestation.

X.

THE RELIGIOUS TRAINING OF CHILDREN.

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.—PROVERBS, xxii., 6.

THERE is not in the wide world a living thing more helpless and unpromising than man in his infancy. He is feeble and dependent beyond any other animal, and for a much longer period. He is utterly unable to perform any good offices for himself. He can not defend himself against the most insignificant enemy or the most inconsiderable danger. He

must inevitably perish, upon whatever spot his frail body may happen to repose, unless some careful hand feed, protect, and cherish him. Of the tact and skill which are to form the endowment of riper years, he does not now manifest the faintest trait. He is even less gifted than brutes of his own age with the instincts which, in the absence of a higher intelligence, guide every other living creature. He breathes, utters some inarticulate sounds, swallows the simple food that is put into his mouth, and makes some unmeaning muscular movements, and that is all he can do to announce to the spectator that this embryo immortal possesses even the lowest of the attributes of things that live.

Such is man physically, at his entrance upon a career in which he is appointed to act so important a part, and fulfill so unfathomable a destiny. Nor of the higher faculties which he is to develop and exercise in after life does the slightest glimmering now appear. He exhibits nothing like *character*, whether good or evil. He has no reason, no conscience, no moral or immoral habits, no religion, no opinions, no ideas. His mind is a blank. His heart is a mere organ for the performance of an animal function.

Yet is there something wonderful and even sublime in this embryo man. He may become a hero, a philosopher, or a saint—a scourge, or a benefactor of his race. He is likely to become an active and competent agent in human affairs, and to perform a part in the drama of the world; and he will assuredly become a partaker either of endless life or of eternal death. Great faculties lie concealed under such unpromising aspects. They are seen by the eyes of God; "yet being unperfect, in his book are they written; they are fashioned in continuance, when as yet there is none of them." They are not substances nor powers, but merely *susceptibilities*. To develop these latent capacities—to bring them out for action and enjoyment—to transform this helpless, insignificant thing into a good and wise man, fitted to serve

God and his generation on earth, and to enjoy him forever in heaven, is the work of education. This is a task which it has pleased God to devolve upon parents, and to it they are bound by obligations as sacred as any that rest upon a moral being.

The duty of bestowing careful, timely culture upon infancy and childhood, is clearly indicated by their exceeding delicacy and susceptibility. Physical developments will indeed proceed very well with only the slightest attention on the part of the parent, or with none at all. The nursery, the play-ground, the field, and the work-shop, invite the bodily organs into due action, and impart vigor, skill, and activity. The intellect, too, however neglected by the teacher, imbibes knowledge from a thousand sources. Each of the senses becomes an inlet for valuable ideas. Business, social converse, human example, even inanimate nature, the sky, the air, and the earth—the elements in all their changes and activities, the vegetable kingdom—in a word, the visible world, and all that is, or is transacted, in it, become sources of instruction, which freely tender their lessons to the opening mind in contact with them, and force their teachings upon it, in its most passive states, and even in spite of indifference or reluctance. From all this it occurs, that every human being who grows up in a civilized community attains a measure of intelligence sufficient for the common purposes of life—of the intelligence that guides the race in the satisfaction of its most pressing wants, and which must, on that account, rank high in comparison with that class of acquisitions and accomplishments which we are wont to dignify with the name of education. Divine Providence has thus mercifully insured to the human being such degrees of physical and mental development as are indispensable in the performance of those functions which pertain to self-preservation, and on which society is dependent for its being and material prosperity. For the higher culture, which gives the mind

enlargement, and elevation, and refinement, and opens before it a career of worthy occupations and enjoyments, years of patient labor and assiduous teaching are requisite; and parents are unquestionably bound, by all the motives which duty and affection impose, to give to their offspring the best education which their providential positions and circumstances will allow.

Without stopping to enforce, by argument or inculcation, one of the plainest and least controverted of duties, we proceed to add, that the highest of the parent's obligations finds its sphere in the *moral* and *religious* training of his offspring. The superior importance of this department of education is sufficiently apparent, from the consideration that, while both the mind and the body, left to themselves, spontaneously acquire, from their own activity, and from the business and conflicts of the world, the discipline, as well as the knowledge and skill, most valuable in the pursuits of after life, the moral susceptibilities, if neglected by parent and teacher, are always perverted and corrupted. The most careful and unremitted culture is requisite to preserve them from irreclaimable deterioration. They come to no good by any spontaneous, unguided efforts or essays of their own—they will not remain in a state of embryo or torpor till genial influences and a plastic hand woo and guide them into kindly manifestations. To let the child alone is to insure both precocity and proficiency in evil. It affords demonstrative evidence of the constitutional depravity of man, as well as of its universality, that early childhood ever betrays a strong proclivity to wrong—that it never fails of growing up in sin, except under decided counteracting influences.

This susceptibility to both moral and to demoralizing influences exists to an extent and at an age little suspected by inattentive observers. We give no countenance to the extravagant speculations of those who teach us that the character of the man, both moral and mental, is fixed in infancy,

anterior to the dawn of reason; but we think it demonstrable that the bias which shapes our earthly and eternal destinies is usually received in early childhood. This is the obvious teaching of the Holy Scriptures; and all careful observation goes to confirm it. The mind, at that early period, is exquisitely susceptible to moral impressions. The delicate surfaces on which the daguerreotype so exactly portrays the human countenance, with no pencil or colors but reflected sunbeams, are not half so impressible as the unsophisticated spirit of childhood. The mind, at that tender age, is not only open to all influences, good and bad, but it spontaneously invites them to write upon its expanding capacities their own image and superscription. It longs for impressions, as the parched corn-field for genial showers. It spreads out its tender leaves to receive them, as the green plant to the dews of heaven. As some flowers follow the sun through all his circuit, and open their gay bosom full upon his glowing, rolling orb, all day long, from morn to noon, from noon to night, so are infancy and childhood irresistibly drawn within the sphere of incessantly active influences, which must go far to fashion their manhood, and impress upon them forms of moral dignity or degradation, which will endure, ineffaceable, through eternity.

This extreme susceptibility of opening life, and its active, urgent tendency to put on the attributes of a moral character, are what demand our most profound solicitude. So strong, especially, is the tendency to evil, that, could we isolate a child so completely as to exclude all external influences whatever, whether of circumstances or direct teaching, we might yet calculate, with all certainty, that his heart would become embittered, and his life deformed, by sinful feelings and vicious habits. His own unsatisfied desires would awaken discontent. The restraints imposed by the laws and conditions of his being would generate repining and resentment. Appetite would become wanton from licentious indulgence;

while pride and self-conceit would speedily shoot forth into a rank luxuriance in the absence of sober counsels and of the fear of God. Still more would there be, of necessity, an utter want of any right religious sentiments—of reverence, and gratitude, and dutifulness toward God, and of charity and justice to men. These results—and they together constitute a character of decided immorality and irreligion—are clearly natural and unavoidable under the circumstances supposed. They come of themselves, spontaneously, at no man's bidding, and can only be prevented by positive ameliorating and counteracting efforts. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that the development of right moral and religious character is wholly the work of education and religious nurture; meaning, by these terms, not the training of the parent and the teacher only, but also the agency of circumstances—while the force of example and association alone, independent of all direct inculcation, is sufficient to impress upon the child's plastic nature any form of vice and ungodliness. Let him grow up among idolaters, and that circumstance insures his being a devotee to false gods, and the deadly foe of all true piety and virtue. Life among the Feejees would infallibly convert the child of Christian parents into a cannibal. Give your babe to be nursed and trained in an infidel family, and he will, without some strong remedial or preventing influence from better sources, grow up to be an enemy and a contemner of Christ. Nurtured in a den of thieves, or smugglers, or robbers, he will feel neither horror nor disapprobation of the atrocious crimes with which he is constantly familiar; and to become the most daring and expert of the gang will, in all probability, be the highest aspiration ever felt by his blighted spirit. Without going beyond the limits of our own neighborhood, or perhaps ten yards from the door of the church where we pay our adoration to God, we may find scores of vile, hardened boys, with whom we could not allow our child habitually to play in the streets without a

feeling of certainty that he would become, like them, a reckless vagrant, upon whom all Christian efforts must be probably unavailing—with regard to whom we never think, when we think of them as having souls, without feeling a shudder of despair.

Such is the susceptibility of the young mind to evil impressions; and it inculcates a Christian lesson upon all parents who have hearts, to care for the immortal destinies of their children, more influential than a thousand arguments. It can not be affirmed, with truth, that pious examples and associations will with equal certainty stamp upon childhood and youth the graceful lineaments of virtue and piety. Allowance is to be made for the *bent* of the fallen spirit. The natural *tendency* and *proclivity* is to sin; and much positive teaching, and much of God's grace, are requisite to achieve the high ends of religion. Yet revelation and experience affirm that good training insures good results. "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." The doctrine comes to us on Divine authority, and without drawback or limitation. It at least inculcates so much as this, that pious example and associations, re-enforced by sound teaching and parental faithfulness, will produce such a character as neither time nor eternity will have cause to regret. Such results do unquestionably imply the co-operation of God's grace; but such a promise does also, by plain and necessary implication, pledge the assistance of that grace, to make the parent's faithfulness effectual to the child's virtue and salvation. Keeping in view always this implicit promise of sufficient assisting grace, let us see what evidence the history of pious families may afford us, that a godly training of children secures their Christian character.

There is cogent proof to this point in the fact that all the evangelical communions are, for the most part, composed of the children of pious parents. We say for the *most part*,

because we joyfully recognise the divine goodness in the conversion of so many persons who have not been blessed with a religious education. These, however, only constitute exceptions to a general rule; and, were we to canvass our pious denominations, we should find that the great body of their communicants are hereditary Christians, in whom the foundations of piety were laid in the godly nurture of their early childhood. Another fact, still more demonstrative of the efficacy of Christian training, is this: every one is acquainted with religious families so wisely ordered, and so graciously visited, that all of the children early become pious. There are families where piety is so uniform, consistent, graceful, and efficient, that we look upon the early conversion of the children as a matter of course. We are surprised and disappointed if one daughter or son remains careless and vain, or becomes vicious and profligate. There is no long season of folly and guilt, and open contempt for divine things, which we look for as almost necessary in the children of the great majority of professedly pious families. Do we not always ascribe the great success of such religious training to the deep, consistent piety which presides over it? And yet we are none of us acquainted with parents whose piety is too elevated for general imitation. We never doubt that we and other Christians might equal or surpass it. If all families were such, or yet more intensely devoted to God, what should hinder the whole host of the children of the Church from becoming the children of the kingdom? After making all just allowance for differences of temperament and disposition, we have yet a right to expect the conversion and salvation of all who are "trained up in the way they should go." If the children of infidel, profligate families, grow up infidels and profligates, hardly ever Christians, it would be a gross reflection upon the Gospel economy, which boasts of counter-working the effects of the fall, and of making grace still more abound where sin abounded before, to suspect for a moment

that it does not possess, or that it will not put forth, a power to save, as effectual and comprehensive as that of sin and Satan to destroy.

It is, beyond all question, the will of Christ that the children of Christian parents should themselves become Christians. It is remarkable that all the promises of God to his people are formally and avowedly extended to their children as well as to themselves. This was a fundamental idea in his covenant with Abraham: "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee and thy seed after thee the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God. This is my covenant between me and you, and thy seed after thee. Every man-child among you shall be circumcised." A foresight of Abraham's faithfulness and success in training up his children religiously was the ground of God's especial confidence in him: "Shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, *and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do judgment and justice.*" The religion of the children, let it be observed, is not a mere nominal, national piety, but the "*keeping of the way of the Lord*, and doing judgment and justice;" not the mere act of circumcision, as is often alleged, but the result of parental authority and religious education: "He will *command* his children after him." The same principle reappears in the Mosaic dispensation; and so entire was God's reliance upon the children to fill up the ranks of the Jewish Church, that, while proselytes from the heathen were not rejected, no provision was made for replenishing it from any foreign source. The prophetic promises guarantee the same high privilege to the children of pious parents under the Christian dispensation: "The promise is unto you and your children." "I

will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh," and "your sons and your daughters shall prophesy." Indignant that any should pretend to doubt or limit the plenitude of his grace toward those who were yet unstained by actual transgression, Christ rebuked the narrow faith of his disciples, and bade them "suffer little children to come unto him," because "of such is the kingdom of heaven." Whoever might reject them, as incapable or unworthy of the Christian dignity, He whose own childhood "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man," had resolved to perfect praise "out of the mouths of babes and sucklings." To children, the apostles, now better taught than before in the mysteries of their Master's large compassions, freely extended the right of baptism, the sign and the seal of the acceptance and sanctification to which they conceded to them a recognized title, as part and parcel of those believing "households," which so early became the nucleus and model of the churches of the living God. The children of Christian parents were thus openly and explicitly recognized as members of the apostolic Church. Even when but one of the parents was a believer, the children were esteemed holy; or, in other words, they were consecrated to God, and legitimate members of the "household of faith." As members of the Church, they are recognized in the apostolic epistles. Paul addresses himself, generally, to the "saints" of Ephesus and Colosse; and, in his more specific instructions, gives his advice to the several classes of Christians composing those churches—to husbands and wives, masters and servants, parents and children, recognizing the last, no less than their parents, as part of Christ's flock, of which he had the oversight. These were Christians, "saints," and "faithful in Christ Jesus," in the estimation of the apostles. They belonged to the kingdom of heaven. They were those upon whom Christ had "laid his hands," whom he had taken "in his arms and blessed," and openly acknowledged and formally claimed as his own. By this

most significant act and solemn declaration of his will, the great Head of the Church announced the fundamental law of his kingdom. Children are the heritage of the Lord. It is the Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom. They are, therefore, to be "brought to Christ"—to be trained for God—to be "brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." To this end he intends the Christian family to be a school of Christ—to live in a holy atmosphere, in which the children shall be bathed and baptized, and nurtured as in a divine, genial element. He would have them put on the Lord Jesus Christ with the first garments of their childhood, and drink in Christian sentiments from the mother's loving, beaming eyes, as they hang upon the breast. He intends them to learn religion, as they learn a thousand other things, from the spirit and tone of the family—from its vocal thanksgivings and songs of praise—from its quiet, joyous Sabbaths—from the penitent tear, the humble carriage, the tender accents, the reverent look and attitude of the father, when, as a priest, he offers the morning and the evening sacrifice. The new immortal that has fallen down into the midst of the Christian family is to be taken into the soul of its piety, to be sanctified by its prayer and faith, and to form a part of that reasonable and acceptable offering in which, morning and evening, the godly parents lay all that they are and all that they have on the altar of sacrifice. This, with faithful, diligent instructions, and restraints adapted to the different periods and exigencies of childhood and youth, is the nurture of the Lord—the right training which, under our gracious economy, insures the early piety of the children of really Christian families. They grow up Christians. They are sanctified from the womb. Even their childish prattle savors of divine things; and they pass on to the attainments and functions of mature piety by gradations so easy and imperceptible that it may not be possible to fix the day of their espousals to the Savior.

To dwell no longer upon this inexhaustible argument, we proceed to notice some theoretical objections to the doctrine here advanced, and some practical obstacles in the way of its realization.

We have already anticipated the objection most likely to be felt and alleged against the lessons suggested by this discussion. They conflict with experience. The children of religious families do not uniformly, nor perhaps usually, become pious, while not a few of the sons and daughters of ungodly and unbelieving parents are converted. This is unquestionably true; and yet the admission does not cast suspicion upon the soundness of our principles, which are sustained by the obvious fact that the great majority of Christians known to us are the children of pious parents, while conversions from other quarters are exceptions to the general rule, which they serve to establish rather than overthrow. It should also be considered that we seldom see the results of these opposite causes in a form to be most striking. Childhood is acted upon by blended influences of good and evil. The piety of most religious families is shamefully defective, and so is shorn of the most of its power. If the parents are orderly, tolerably uniform Christians, they perhaps lack fervor, or faith, or affection, and so their influence is impaired or neutralized. If the father is pious, the mother, it may be, is a worldling. If home is a place of sanctity and security, the children, it may be, are allowed to associate out of doors with wicked companions. So the sons and daughters of irreligious parents often find a partial antidote for home infidelity or impiety in out-door associations, at school, in the work-shop, in the Church, or in good books. Still, the *tendencies* of piety or impiety in the parent are precisely as we have stated them. These causes always produce their proper effects and no others, however these effects may be modified by other agencies.

A cautious orthodoxy has no doubt felt another objection

to our doctrine, far more radical and weighty. It suspects us of attributing too much to human efforts, and of forgetting that God is the only efficient worker. This objection fails to comprehend our meaning. We devoutly ascribe all efficiency to God, and only claim for human agency such power as the divine grace imparts to it. Let us seek the light of an analogy. Children do apparently, and in so far as we can perceive, derive life and being from their parents alone; and yet we know that God claims the bestowment of life and being as his special and peculiar prerogative. No intelligent Christian is ever puzzled or scandalized by such difficulty. They find their solution in this truism: Man is the acting, God the efficient cause. So of the case under consideration. The right training and godly nurture which insure piety in our children are the parents' duty and work; but they only produce this spiritual result because God wills it and works it in this particular way. Contemplate this objection through another medium. It is a fact familiar to us all, that wicked parents have the power to train up wicked children. They infuse into them their own spirit—their own love of sin and profligacy—their own contempt for religion, and virtue, and pious men. We need not inquire whence they get this terrible, mysterious power. It is enough that we see them wield it, to the ruin of their families, and that God does not wrest it from them. Now the Gospel is a remedial dispensation. It is out in a campaign against sin, meaning to subdue it. Here is a warfare between Christ and Belial, and both employ men—employ parents—as their agents. Should we expect the servant of Satan to be intrusted with higher powers and more effective weapons than the servant of God? The infidel parent, animated by the spirit of the devil, is able to infuse into the mind and heart of his child his own diabolical sentiments—his depravity, his contempt for religion, his hatred of Christ. The pious man has another spirit. He is full of the Holy

Ghost. It pervades his words, tempers, thoughts, and deeds. May it not comport with the divine wisdom and mercy that he too should pour the contents of his own spirit into the heart of his babes—his love, his purity, his gratitude, his meekness, his zeal for the right? Think of God's strong desire that children should become pious, and also that infancy and childhood are the best—almost the only season for effectual permanent impressions, and then say if the Christian doctrine of this discourse is wholly incredible in your estimation.

There may be those who would hesitate to cherish such a conclusion, and who yet find some discrepancies between our theory of Christian education and their own ideas of God's principles and methods of working. They have a sentiment that some maturity of intellect is requisite in order to a child's becoming a fit subject of gracious operations. Let us devote a moment to this difficulty, which has some show of reason. We have scriptural authority for affirming that, in some instances at least, the Holy Spirit has impressed the characteristics of piety upon children in early infancy, and even from their birth. Such instances may be thought miraculous, but they prove none the less conclusively the *possibility* of divine operations upon children anterior to the development of reason. There is, at least, nothing in the nature of the case to exclude them. Again, we all believe that God's grace renews those infants who die and go to heaven before they know how to discern the right hand from the left. This quite dissipates the philosophical objection, and there is, therefore, no *natural* obstacle to the work of grace in a child. Indeed, when we recollect that conversion has quite as much to do with the heart as with the intellect, and that the affections and moral sentiments of children are developed, and may be variously acted upon and modified in their earliest years, and anterior to the development of the understanding, it is not a little strange that this difficulty should have arisen in thoughtful minds.

This objection is worthy of another reply. God's grace does not—at least it does not, it is said, *ordinarily*—operate before the mind is capable of exercising faith. This is far from self-evident. Why do parents pray for their children, and ask grace in their behalf, even in early infancy, if they do not believe in the probability, or possibility, of such communications? Who ever felt restrained from offering such intercessions by this consideration? When children before their conversion, and before conversion is expected, manifest good dispositions and tendencies, and refrain from bad actions and bad tempers, we hear all Christian parents ascribe these virtues not to innate goodness so much as to restraining grace. All believe, then, that grace is imparted to children who are well trained by Christian parents, but only not renewing grace. In order to this more important operation, the child must be able to have a doctrinal basis, and to *believe*. But if he fear, and love, and obey God, and gradually grow up to trust and believe in Christ, as he bows the pliant knee, and offers up the infant heart at his altar, are not these real Christian characteristics, developed, indeed, a little in advance of faith proper, but one and all of them containing the germ of faith, and spontaneously leading on to its exercise? And may not the parent's faith, which is able to remove mountains, avail something toward the child's renewing? We pray for impenitent sinners among ourselves, and for the myriads of the heathen world, hoping that our faith may hasten their conversion. Now if our prayers may be, in the divine economy, the means of sending forth a regenerating energy over half the earth's circumference, may they not be equally efficacious in the regeneration of the loved ones who nestle in our bosoms and hang upon our necks, and send tides of joy to the heart by their innocent glee, and the echoes of their toddling footsteps? Doubtless there is a power for good to the whole household in the parent's faith. There is a family religion which embraces, interpenetrates

and nurtures every mind, and soul, and interest in the tabernacle of the righteous—every member, and nerve, and sinew of the organization. The Scriptures evidently contemplate such a power and intensity of domestic nurture and piety.

What hinders that such results should be more common? The low state of religion is doubtless the chief obstacle. Such general statements, however, are not likely to lead to any salutary reform. Let us analyze a little.

1. The first obstacle which we notice is the want of such family government as is most favorable to domestic religion. In many families the parental authority is never fully acknowledged, and the daily life is spent in an endless struggle between coercion and resistance, or forced, reluctant obedience. The family institution is a divine ordinance, obviously designed as a preparatory school for such a training of childhood as shall best fit it for the reception of religious truth and the performance of religious duties. It is a period of physical weakness and absolute dependence upon the parent, when the heart is impressible, and the mind plastic—when the powers of imitation are strong and active, and when the most unlimited confidence is reposed in the truth and propriety of parental inculcations. Over this period of human life, the laws of society, no less than the laws of heaven, make the parents' authority supreme. The father represents the divine Lawgiver, whose vicegerent he is for carrying out the gracious designs of an infinite benevolence, in the establishment of upright principles, and the formation of a pure, virtuous character. Almost every thing depends on preoccupying the soul with right habits, of which none is so intimately connected with favorable religious developments as the habit of *obedience to legitimate authority*. This is a strictly fundamental principle in religion, and should be the *first* object in family government. Every parent who fails in establishing this unquestioned dominion over his child, does in the

same degree entail upon him a curse of fearful omen. He fosters the inborn enmity of the heart to the claims of religion, and so radicates and strengthens its opposition to the government of God, that the usual agencies of the Gospel are very likely to prove ineffectual for the great ends of piety and salvation. That this dereliction of parental faithfulness is one of the most common as well as inveterate hinderances to conversion, all experience and observation offer their concurrent testimony. It may be laid down as a Christian axiom, that the rebellious spirit which refuses obedience to parents will be the last to render it to God.

This fundamental vice in family training assumes a special form, in its connection with religion, well worthy of our attention. Many parents, whose ordinary administration of family government is judicious and firm, often act upon a vague theory that, in all matters related to Christian faith and practice, their children should be left free from control. They will advise, but nothing farther. Hence the children are allowed to grow up in irreligious habits, much as they know and hear of religious principle and duty. They go to church when and where they will, or, if they prefer it, not at all. They frequent Sunday-school if they choose, and only as often and as long as they please. They read what books they like, or accident supplies, on the Sabbath, and at other times. They are absent from family prayer when they prefer play or sleep to devotion. So of doubtful amusements and company; the parents, it may be, give good counsel till it is nauseous, but they will exercise no control. Here, again, is a perpetual conflict between the religious sentiments of the father or mother and the ungodly propensities of the child, under which the temper is soured, the conscience seared, the heart hardened, and the very name of religion made odious. Now all this is wrong, fatally wrong. The parent is bound to decide all these questions *absolutely* and without appeal, and to settle them so early that the child shall no

more think of breaking the Sabbath, or neglecting church, or Sunday-school, or family prayer, or of playing cards, or going to a ball or a theatre, or of keeping improper company, than he would of picking a lock or telling a lie. Under such firm, enlightened regimen, habit comes to favor piety. The claims of religion are reverenced, and the heart may be expected to open kindly to its genial influences.

We can not fail to notice, in treating of so momentous an evil, another dereliction of parental duty, more gross and criminal than the pitiable imbecility to which the previous paragraph has been devoted. In instances not a few, as many heart-sick pastors will bear us witness, religious parents become voluntary purveyors to the anti-Christian propensities of their children. At that period of life when godly counsels, and pure examples, and loving, but inflexible firmness, are most needed by the inexperienced youth just about to look upon life in its more seductive, dangerous aspects, do we often see parents, hitherto bright examples of consistent, fervent piety, suddenly transformed in their character and views. Fathers long remarkable for the gentle, beautiful dignity of their sway over the household domain, relax the strictness of their principles, and recognize no law higher than the inclinations of their children. Mothers long known and reverenced for Christian simplicity and fidelity, and even *awful* for their uncompromising opposition to worldly vanities, pleasures, and conformities, contrive to backslide when the time comes for their daughters to leave school, in order to introduce them into life with proper *éclat*. These poor young creatures, all decorated and prepared for immolation upon the altar of fashion by maternal indulgence or ambition, powerfully remind us of the children caused by the apostate Jewish parents "to pass through the fire to Moloch." The evil here referred to strikes us as one of fatal tendency, as well as of alarming and increasing magnitude. Not only in our large cities, where fashion is supposed to exert the most potent in-

fluence, but in many of our formerly quiet country towns and villages, are our Christian families giving way to the spirit of the world, and opening their doors to amusements which have long since been placed under condemnation by all the spiritual piety in the land. It seems recently to have been discovered that cards, balls, and operas are in no way incompatible with a creditable profession of religion, and that they constitute innocent and salutary methods for the acquisition and display of such graces as most befit the sons and daughters of opulent, educated Christian families. We invoke the attention of parents to this overflowing fountain of corruption, which threatens to inundate the churches of all our pious denominations, and banish from among us the simplicity of our Christian habits and the angelic purity of our Christian homes. The example of such a fashionable piety is fearfully contagious, and calls for immediate, earnest interference. One of the most alarming symptoms of this spreading plague is the complacent approbation now and then accorded to it by a popular preacher. *We* desire none of his laurels; and we shall have a more quiet conscience for having raised this note of warning, whoever may sneer or anathematize.

2. Returning from this long digression, we remark that the general tone and spirit of some religious families is such as to neutralize the influence of the parents' piety, and counteract their efforts to cultivate piety in their children. There is always some interest or excitement more prevalent and intense than religion. In some families it is the pursuit of wealth; in some, vanity, or pride, or petty rivalries—a desire to outdo, or outdress, or outshine a neighbor—envy, or irritation, or hostility provoked by the fair name and prosperity of others—a striving to lower or supplant them—a silly ambition to be intimate with the rich or fashionable, and to introduce the young people into what is called, often preposterously enough, *good society*, and so secure for them advantageous alliances. It makes little difference what may for the time

be the dominant interest; every child in the house understands it, and learns to sympathize with it, for childhood comprehends the parents' sentiments, passions, and antipathies, long before it can comprehend their moral teachings. Every one perceives and feels what is most thought of, most felt by the parent, and that, whatever that something is, it is not religion. Now it is in accordance with a well-known law of the human mind, that the stronger emotion, excitement, or interest rules, and expels the weaker. Two powerful sentiments can not coexist and operate upon the mind at the same time. We can not serve two masters. We can not serve God and Mammon, just because the stronger will soon subjugate the weaker; and if God does not reign, then Mammon will be God. Now this actual predominance of another interest over the religious interest renders null and void all attempts at Christian training, in so far as the conversion and consecration of children are contemplated. These spiritual achievements require that the atmosphere of domestic piety be pure, and genial, and fervid—radiant with heavenly hopes —instinct with benevolence—redolent with charity. Religion must dwell serene and supreme in the bosom of the domestic empire. It must subordinate all other interests and aspirations, and have authority to say to every passion, "Be still." Then may it be able to come into the heart of childhood and youth with a graceful, grateful welcome.

3. Christian education is often thwarted in its aims by its want of sympathy with the Church. We have no fellowship with much of the sentimental nonsense put forth so profusely nowadays on this subject; still, we can not say less of the Church of Christ than that it is a holy institution for the edification and spiritual training of all who look to Jesus the Mediator for grace and eternal life. Its teachings, its sacraments, its worship, its discipline, are, in the design of its great Founder, effective means of grace. The unction of the Holy One and the power of the Highest reside in them,

and operate through them. The Church is the house of God and the gate of heaven. Thither the tribes go up to worship, and take their wives and their little ones, to offer sacrifices and keep holy day. The connection between the public ordinances of religion and its more private agencies, though but little thought of by many Christians, is yet exceedingly intimate and important—so important, that neither home training nor Sunday-school inculcations are likely to attain to any saving efficacy without it. I think we do not generally expect children to become truly pious without the superaddition of the solemnities of the sanctuary to the lessons of the parent and the lay teacher. The good seed thus sown in the tender mind, wants, in order to its germination and growth, the genial dews and showers that fall nowhere else so plentifully as on Mount Zion. There the pleasure of the Lord delights to dwell; and it will be the glory of this man and of that, that he was born there. Now the power of the Church to awaken into spiritual life and fruitfulness the good principles implanted in the mind by parental teaching, will always be very nearly as the respect, reverence, and love with which its ministrations and ordinances are regarded in the family circle. Think, then, what must be the baleful influence of the captious, fault-finding, unloving spirit cherished by so many parents, and by their children of course —for such faults are, above all others, family faults—toward the Church, its teachings, and ordinances. Some professors of religion, who give the ordinary evidence of piety, contrive to be always in a state of dissatisfaction and smothered disaffection toward their brethren and pastor. Neither their families nor their neighbors hear much on this subject besides regrets and complaints. This or that member of the Church is always wrong, or perhaps the Church itself is tainted by some radical evil—by a vicious polity, or unsound principles, or bad administration. The pastor, it may be, is more faulty still. He lacks eloquence, or intelligence, or

pathos, or industry, or humility, or manners. He is loud, or slow, or ungainly—an abolitionist, or not an abolitionist—a politician. He fraternizes with men or with associations in ill odor with the complainant, or he does, or is, somewhat else not relished by him. It follows, that from so many grievous imperfections, decline, apostasy, and ruin can not be long in coming. If they do come, this croaker ought to know that, whoever is to blame, *he* will not be held guiltless. He, above all others, weakens the hands that already hang down, and loosens the foundations which, if he augurs right, were already about to be swept away. But the chief calamity is likely to be felt in his own household. The ministry, so held up to dishonor in the presence of his children, loses all authority and efficiency, at least for them. They will crave no part, and cherish no faith, in its teachings or its prayers. The atmosphere of a Church so exceptionable and fallen, will be to them a tainted medium, from which they will imbibe no sanatory, vital aliment. Their teeth are set on edge, because their parents eat sour grapes; and however it may be to others, the house of the Lord has neither comfort, nor grace, nor beauty for them. Conversions in such a family would be miracles indeed, whatever the skill or fidelity of parental training.

The children grow ashamed of a Church with which their parents have so many grounds of dissatisfaction or disgust. If they continue to attend on its ministrations, it is likely to be in such a temper as repels instruction and defies conviction. If they desert its courts for some other form of Christian worship, the selection will probably be dictated by a worldly spirit, which dares to seek the gratification of its vanity or its fastidiousness in the name of a crucified Savior, and which is chiefly solicitous to escape the rebukes of an earnest, unsparing ministry, and the restraints of a pure Christian discipline. It might not be easy to determine on which side lies the greater danger. The actual position of

both parent and child is about as unfavorable to all Christian interests and satisfactions as any which the arch-enemy of souls could devise. To escape from it, in any other direction than that offered by hearty repentance and thorough reformation, involves the sacrifice of a class of hereditary sentiments and convictions, much relied on under the Gospel economy for drawing the youthful mind to piety, and for working out the soul's salvation. The Church is essentially weaker for all such unsound, doubtful adherents, while it alone possesses for them and their children the spiritual resources from which they are likely to derive whatever saving piety they are destined to attain on this theatre of their probation.

But, apart from the captiousness of those whose strongest grounds of dissatisfaction with the Christian Church are precisely its uncompromising fidelity in enforcing evangelical doctrines and morals, it must be confessed that the real imperfections of its piety constitute a great obstacle in the way of the godly training and early conversion of its children. The Church does not labor earnestly for this result, does not pray for it, or expect it, though that is really the most important of its sacred functions, and its chief reliance for growth and efficiency. The individual members of which it is composed are not all, nor a majority of them, devout, spiritual persons, living in habitual communion with God, and conciliating, by their faith and fervent prayers, and stainless sanctity, those divine influences which are indispensable to the work of regeneration. The real efficiency of the Church resides with a few, whose moral forces are nearly exhausted in bearing the burdens and counteracting the malign influences of the imperfect, halting piety of our average Christianity. We therefore lack the pure, fervid atmosphere which is adapted to nurture and invigorate the spiritual life in all who inhale it. We are nearly strangers to that intensity of Christian fellowship, and fervency of joint supplication, reck-

oned on, in the primitive Church, as distinct powers of the Gospel economy, and the living source of efficiency in all its aggressive movements. Does any one suspect that Christianity accomplishes in our day all that it is adapted and intended to achieve for mankind? Four fifths of the population of our most evangelized communities live and die unconverted. Little less than a moiety of the children of our Christian families fall into the ranks of an impenitent, unregenerate world. Shall it be so evermore? Shall Christ never see the travail of his soul, and be satisfied? Is Satan to triumph to the end? We look confidently for a better day, when the Church shall be anointed afresh, and reinvested with all her legitimate original powers.

The actual type of our Christianity is specially deficient in those attributes which are adapted to exert the greatest power over the early period of life, when religious sentiments and habits are contracted by sympathy and imitation, rather than through any conscious effort of intellect or volition. It is a bustling, devising, out-door piety, comprehensive in its schemes, and effective in execution, but marvelously poor in those genial, penetrating, all-embracing influences, which imbosom childhood and youth in a genial atmosphere, to breathe which is to imbibe the pure elements of a new and higher life, and to refresh all good aspirations and tendencies with the dews of heaven. Our Christianity is no longer austere and repulsive, with puritanical strictness and much ado about trifles; but its cheerfulness and amenity savor strongly of the levity and compliant spirit of the world. It lacks that high religious joy which diffuses itself over common life like a heavenly radiance. It lacks the "shining face" that reflects upon the family and the social circle the divine splendors with which it has had long and deep communion on the mount. Compared with the primitive Church, or even with our fathers, we know little of that "peace of God," which is not a mere negative state that ensues when the en-

mity of sin and the war of passion have subsided; but which is in real antagonism to all sinful dispositions—a positive element of moral efficiency—a moving tide of consolation and influence, that mingles and flows on with the river of daily life, tinging and refreshing each object that is laved by its waters. The Church greatly needs, in order to an effective discharge of its duties to the young, that strong assurance of acceptance with God that rested upon Edwards, Wesley, Whitefield, and their contemporaries, like a perpetual sunshine, and imparted to their ministry and their presence a preternatural efficiency, and a sublime, subduing dignity, which was felt by all ages and conditions. We need, it may be, more than all these, for the special object now under discussion, a new baptism of brotherly love, such as in the days of the apostles made the whole multitude of the disciples "of one accord;" and, while it disarmed enmity and overawed authority, won the applause and admiration of the pagan world. It is through these milder elements, which we have enumerated, that Christianity chiefly acts upon the world as an *influence*, and it is by its influence, rather than by positive, overt ministrations and inculcations, that it can hope to penetrate the heart and mold the character of childhood. Joy, peace, courage, and divine charity have power to propagate themselves. They act upon the young more especially by sympathy and contagion. They diffuse themselves spontaneously through the family circle, transforming and assimilating gentle natures and tender hearts by the divine grace of which they are redolent. Christian sentiments are thus conveyed into the soul, and secure a lodgment there, as soon as the affections of the child are brought into play—earlier, by many years, than the period when the understanding becomes competent, intelligently, to embrace doctrinal Christianity.

4. The last, and, as being the most prevalent and radical, perhaps the strongest, obstacle to the success of Christian

training to which we call attention, is *unbelief*. Christian parents do not generally expect their children to grow up pious. They believe that a religious education will, very likely, be highly beneficial to them in various ways; that it will restrain them from vice, and furnish their minds with valuable knowledge, and facilitate their conversion at a later period; but we seldom find a father or mother who really looks upon Christian education as a divinely-appointed means of grace, and as God's chosen agency for the salvation of their offspring. They pray that sanctifying, saving grace may be showered down upon their babes, even before they can walk or speak; but, with a strange inconsistency, postpone all hope of receiving answers of prayer to a future period, distant by many years. They follow a theory which allows, and almost requires, a career in sin and impenitence, before a gracious state is attained. When the subject shall have been thus prepared for bitter repentance, they trust he will be arrested in his folly, and, under the influence of some prevalent, powerful religious excitement, brought to bow to the cross. The revival is the agency often looked to for a result which God proposes to accomplish by his blessing on Christian education. The theory will have years of transgression; the divine word would forestall all of this guilt and danger by training up the child in the way he should go, not that he may come into it at a mature age, but that he may walk in it all along, and never depart from it. Upon this theory, then, which does not expect the result promised in the divine word, parents do not seek it nor work for it. The exertions which they actually put forth do by no means satisfy the idea of *training*. That involves the notion of patient, protracted, incessant effort; of earnest, trustful prayer; of effective, intelligible, appropriating faith; of a holy, emphatic example; of a gentle, winning, loving spirit; of an obedient, all-embracing, and intense piety, which should transform our homes into Bethels, and our hearths into holy, consecrated

altars, upon which incense and peace-offerings shall blaze evermore. They err grievously who conclude that such results as are proposed by the theory here discussed would supersede revivals. They would wrap the Church in a heavenly flame and triple its energies. They would beautify it with holiness. Influences, powerful as the Pentecostal spirit, would stream out on every side; and sinners, of whom Charity itself has ceased to hope, would be penetrated by the moral power of a sanctified church. The "unlearned and the unbeliever," on coming into the presence of such a Christian congregation, would be compelled to recognize, in the "still small voice" of its universal testimony, an authority more potent than the miracle of "tongues." "Convinced of all and judged of all," the secrets of their hearts would be made manifest, "and so, falling down on their faces, they would worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth."

Our argument is suggestive of many practical, impressive lessons, of which the limits prescribed to a sermon do not allow us to make application. In the bosoms of many Christian parents we are sure we shall have awakened deep and perhaps unavailing regrets, but also, we trust, high and holy purposes. To pastors our subject appeals in the thrice-repeated, earnest words addressed by the great Teacher to Peter—"Feed my lambs." The Sunday-school teacher, who has been raised up in this age of changes to fulfill a class of duties much neglected by both parent and pastor, will discover, we think, in the doctrines here set forth, clear intimations of the dignity and usefulness of his benevolent and truly evangelical function. It is, however, foreign from our object to follow out these practical details. Content to have thrown out some important suggestions, which, as it has long seemed to us, are too little heeded in our evangelizing plans, we leave their fuller discussion and their application to some future occasion.

XI.

THE GRAIN OF MUSTARD-SEED.

The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; which, indeed, is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.—MATTH., xiii., 31, 32.

IN comparing the labors of men with any of the Divine operations, we shall be struck with this characteristic difference between them: in the former, what chiefly attracts our attention is the great outlay of effort, and instrumentality, and appliances; in the latter there is no ostentation of means. The hand of God is, for the most part, invisible, and can only be discovered by the most careful investigation. The *results* alone strike the spectator. Man proceeds to rear a habitation to shelter himself from the elements and from the public gaze. Think of the turmoil, the confusion, the various activities that are put in requisition for the accomplishment of this object. The ax-man enters the ancient forest, and fells its giant pines; the miner penetrates the caverns of the earth in quest of material; the quarrier blasts and fashions the granite or the marble; the four quarters of the earth contribute resources, which are to be collected by the agency of wind, and tide, and steam, and the toil of man and beast. Then comes the strain of sinews and of complicated machines to elevate the massive blocks to their places, and arrange them in their order. Artisans and artists are now called to supply the infinite details of convenience and decoration; and at last, after months, it may be years, of toil and confusion, the work is completed. The din ceases, the scaffoldings are removed, the mechanical contrivances disappear, the rub-

bish is cleared away, and a structure stands out to view, elegant, or decent, or humble, according to the skill or means of the builder. Such is the work of man in his constructive efforts. The struggle with difficulties, the ceaseless noise and turmoil, the wear and tear of the laborers from day to day, through so long a period, are what most engage our attention. What a contrast with God's operations! He *spoke*, and the earth stood forth. He said, Let there be light, and there was light. He ordained the moon and the stars, and they entered upon their career. There is no parade of means —no turmoil. The quiet, unobtrusive power of God has achieved all in silence, and with infinite ease. So his universe fulfills all its functions. All the heavenly bodies revolve and shine, without noise or friction, with less appearance of effort than attends the simplest of our mechanical or household operations. How mighty—how skillful—how wonderful in counsel and excellent in working! The changes of the seasons, the more frequent vicissitudes of day and night, all the aspects and variations of nature, illustrate this idea. We close our eyes at night to sleep, unsuspicious of change. In the morning, the earth, through many degrees of latitude and longitude, over whole realms and empires, is clad in robes of dazzling whiteness. "He scattereth his hoar-frost like ashes." In another day, by a process equally noiseless and unobserved, the vast fields of snow are dissolved, and a sombre vail is again spread over the earth. How glorious the gorgeous picture spread out upon the face of nature by every clear, bright sun-rising! It is an immense creation of incomparable beauty, lavished upon the world to awaken its joyous gratitude to God, of whom "day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge."

In those occupations in which human labor is more manifestly dependent upon the divine co-operation, we may find ample illustration of our leading thought. The husbandman does his work with toil and painstaking. He clears the soil

of its encumbrances, gathers out the stones thereof, and builds up walls to protect it from the incursions of wild beasts. He plows, and manures, and sows, and tills, and watches, and waits. It is the business of his toilsome life day and night to act his part as a laborer together with God, who alone giveth the increase. How different the divine process! How quiet, and silent, and unobserved! By-and-by comes the former rain. The sun shines in his noiseless career, and the tender shoot begins to show itself. By degrees imperceptible, and by agencies and laws unseen and inappreciable, the growth advances from stage to stage, till the glad husbandman is rewarded with the ripened harvest. The increase is of God; but the toil, the anxiety, the bustle, all of the human agent.

Another illustration, for which the history of every family and every individual offers materials, will bring us nearer to our present object. The mental training of a child, an object so very simple in itself, is only attained as the result of many years of incessant labor, and watchfulness, and painstaking, not only on the part of the parent, but of teachers, and of the child himself. Think of the endless inculcations and repetitions—of the expenditure of time, and toil, and of money—of the books, and models, and charts, and instruments—of the going and returning—of the long journeys, and the sad partings, and the tedious absences which usually occupy one fourth part of the entire period of life. This parade of means and efforts, which constitutes the visible history of the individual through a series of years, leads to a modification of mind and character, important, indeed, but so slow and gradual that the most attentive and sagacious observer is unable to mark the successive steps of the progression. A succession of impressions, constituting a great mental transformation, has been made upon the individual. He has imperceptibly received new endowments for influence, for action, and for enjoyment, never to be lost in this

world or that which is to come. Neither the anxious parent, nor the faithful teacher, nor the people in the midst of whom this transforming process has been going on, have been able to recognize more than the dubious evidences of tardy improvement, while their attention and their solicitude have been fully occupied and engrossed by the endless succession and the wearisome din of visible efforts and appliances. Man is weak; and in proportion to his weakness are the multitude and the cumbrousness of the means and instrumentalities by which he strives to attain his objects. God is almighty. He needs neither means nor expedients to carry out his purposes. His processes are simple and noiseless. His creation is not coerced into its harmonies by the application of constraining forces. "Fire and hail, snow and vapors, and stormy winds, fulfill his word." His great designs germinate and ripen in the sunshine of his divine favor. His empire owes nothing to violence—his authority nothing to show and noise. His kingdom cometh not with observation. "It is like to a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; which, indeed, is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof."

I. The text announces a fundamental law of Christ's kingdom, in obedience to which it has achieved all its successes. Our Savior, we may presume, had special reference to the humble beginnings and to the future triumphs of his Gospel in the world. Nothing, surely, could be less imposing, or less promising of great results, than was the cause of Jesus up to the time of this announcement. Whether we consider the humble condition of our Lord himself, or the character of those whom he had gathered around him, in the sublime enterprise upon which he visited our world, nothing could seem less probable than the triumph of the new system of religion. He, indeed, wielded a great force in his power of working miracles; but these, however useful as the means

of awakening attention, were not fit agents for propagating the truths of which the new religion consisted. These were "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," and manifestly could only be diffused by means of persuasion—by bringing the doctrines of Christ into contact with human minds till they should be convinced of the truth, and so become willing to render to it a spontaneous and cheerful obedience. One poor man, a carpenter and a carpenter's son, with a dozen illiterate followers, taken from the lowest walks of life, stood upon the shore of the Sea of Galilee, and spoke the truth in parables. Behold the germ of the glorious Gospel! Recognize in such a beginning the foundation of a kingdom destined to embrace this wide world! A few simple-hearted men had been persuaded, and had sincerely embraced new opinions. That was all. At least that was all that appeared to the world; and no great enterprise, it will be admitted, had ever a less propitious introduction. We have no evidence that the Gospel made much progress during Christ's personal ministry. We hear of a few women who had accompanied him from Galilee to Jerusalem, where they were present at the closing scenes of his life; but for the most part, the multitudes who attended upon his ministry, and witnessed his miracles, but partially comprehended his doctrines, and, beyond the temporary excitement and some expressions of spontaneous admiration, we hear of no wonderful results. Few, it is evident, were either converted or convinced, and it is both an instructive and an encouraging fact, that the divine Savior was a much less successful preacher of the Gospel than multitudes of men who have since labored in his Church. There seems to be no reason to doubt that Peter's one sermon on the day of Pentecost made more converts than the entire ministry of Jesus, but that ministry converted Peter himself, and John, and James, and their associates; and it planted the grain of mustard-seed, which has grown into a great tree, in whose branches and under whose

shade so many millions on earth and in heaven have found shelter and refreshment.

The progress of the Gospel, no less than its origin, has ever been true to the simple, instructive analogy of our text. Its real history has never been written, and never can be. Ecclesiastical annals are made up of endless, and often useless accounts of controversies, schisms, heresies, and apostasies. The accession of princes to the fold, religious wars, the biography of bishops and dignitaries—these, and similar events, constitute what is called Church history. It is, perhaps, all that we had a right to expect—all that could be written on earth; but we may be sure that the final day will disclose a record of a widely different character. The noiseless toil of the apostle and the missionary in his proper field—the unostentatious labor of the pastor among his simple flock—the patient efforts of individual Christians to do good in the family and the social circle, or to save one sinner, over whose repentance there is joy in heaven—the hungering and thirsting after righteousness—the good fight of faith—the earnest prayer—the fervent charity—the holy life—these are the great facts upon which the approving eye of God is fixed, and which really constitute the growth of Christianity. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." His genial showers soften the furrowed field, and nourish the hidden roots of the tree of life. His benignant rays impart all their beauty and fragrance to its healing leaves, and bathe in heavenly hues its golden fruit. The least of all seeds at the beginning, this grain of mustard-seed has indeed become a great tree, in whose spreading branches the birds of heaven find shelter, but its growth has been gradual, and imperceptibly slow. The kingdom which it so beautifully shadows forth has no greater extent and influence than it hath achieved over willing and loving souls.

How inconsiderable, how hopelessly insignificant, in hu-

man estimation, was the commencement of the Reformation in the fifteenth century! It sprang from a single fact, of which a thousand such exist within the circle of our acquaintance. An humble, secluded individual had learned, by the study of his Bible, the doctrine of justification by faith. This was the seed that germinated in his own bosom, and became a great tree. It was not the disputations, nor the diets, nor the wars, nor the books of controversy, of which the history of those times is made up. These were but the outward, often the accidental and unimportant circumstantials that attended, and sometimes retarded the growth of the Reformation. The Reformation itself was the spread of this revived Christian doctrine. It was the propagation of this great idea that alienated so many nations from the faith of Rome, that threw such contempt upon her dogmas, and rites, and abuses, and laid the foundation of what we know and enjoy of pure spiritual Christianity.

The subject finds a similar illustration in the great revival of pure religion under the Wesleys and Whitefield. Three or four young men, students in Oxford, fell into a deep concern in regard to their spiritual condition, which resulted in their clear and joyous conversion. This was the germ of the great things which have followed in Britain, and America, and in the four quarters of the earth. This new experience, of which their hearts were full, and the Scripture doctrines on which it was based, became the theme of their conversation with their friends, of their literary productions, and of their public preaching. And these were the only means employed in the propagation of their doctrines. There was no interference or help from political power or material agency—a circumstance by which this great revival was distinguished from the Reformation under Luther, and Calvin, and their associates and followers, and which enables us to see more clearly the efficiency and the growth of the spiritual principle to which America, and Britain, and the continent

of Europe are indebted, under God, for whatever evangelical piety they now possess. We mark the stages of a development hitherto disturbed by no other counteracting agency than the depravity of sinful men—a force which every evangelizing movement must expect to encounter. How small, and, upon all human calculation, how feeble, the commencement of this great work! Three obscure men, unknown to the world and to fame, after trying for some time to obtain religious comfort by their own righteousness, at length discover their own insufficiency, and put their trust in Christ. This, and nothing more, was the germ of that new life which has since poured its tide into millions of hearts. It was the planting of the grain of mustard-seed, which has since had a growth so marvelous, and has shot out its long branches into so many nations. At first these holy men had much to do to induce a few of their friends to tolerate their new ideas. Then they met with some favor among the poorer classes. Many years elapsed before any visible impression was made upon the public mind of England. A secret process, however, was going on, favorable to future successes. This plant of righteousness was striking deep its roots in a good soil. The new ideas were working their way in the masses, and nurturing a strong moral sentiment. They were acquiring a breadth and solidity of basis very necessary to support the goodly superstructure that was to rise upon it. By-and-by, Scotland and Ireland felt the new influence. Still more expansion the revival found in America, where it has at length been welcomed by nearly every branch of Protestantism. The new life which has been still more recently experienced in the fallen churches of continental Europe was demonstrably derived from the same source; while the wide diffusion of missionary labors promises, at no distant period, to comprehend the whole human family in the sphere of this, the highest, purest development of the Gospel. In this brief outline of the last great revival of Christianity, we are

chiefly struck with the inherent, independent power of the Gospel. It has prospered and triumphed on its own resources. Its progress has been a *growth*, a development. It has extended by the exertion of its own central forces, rather than by forming alliances with other powers, or pressing into its service external agents. It has become a great tree, extending its branches into the whole world; but they all derive their life from one root. It is a single grain of mustard-seed, a seed the smallest of all seeds, that has grown into so much luxuriance, beauty, and fruitfulness.

II. But the kingdom of heaven, which is within us, and consisteth of righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, no less than that external manifestation of religion of which I have spoken, finds beautiful and instructive illustration in the parable.

In the first place, how faint and almost inappreciable are the earliest traces of opinion, or sentiment, or conviction, in which the interior, spiritual life has its origin! None of us can remember the commencement of our religious impressions, though this is probably the true starting-point in the formation of our religious character. The gracious manifestation first made to the soul through the medium of parental instruction, or the preaching of the Gospel, of reading or meditation, or of other agencies, hovers over the immortal existence, shining upon it with a radiance sometimes bright and sometimes dim. It is usually unheeded and neglected. It is seldom recognized as a religious influence, though ever performing a religious function. At one time it moves upon our fears, at another upon our hopes. Now it discloses to us the vanity of the world, and now imparts some faint visions of the blessedness of heaven, and embitters present enjoyments by suggesting thoughts of their brevity and of the infinite good sacrificed for them. It gives light and pungency to the conscience. It disturbs, from time to time, the soul's slumbers. It keeps us at least partly awake, and denies us

the refuge of an absolute oblivion of religious obligations. It never constrains the will. It does no violence to our freedom. It presents the alternatives of the Gospel, but always leaves us to choose for ourselves. And yet this agency, so subtle, so gentle, so wooing, so scrupulous and respectful in regard to our mental and moral constitution and rights, is divine, and Heaven's appointed messenger of all good to the soul. Upon so inconsiderable a circumstance as our showing respect to these slight intimations does our salvation depend. Through these whispers the voice of God finds utterance. They bear his offers of mercy and his threats of vengeance. It is his way of speaking to sinners, and of inviting them to be reconciled to him. He chooses to speak in a still, small voice. "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear."

As the beginning of God's movement toward sinners is so quiet and unobtrusive as often to pass unheeded, so the first step in the sinner's return to God is exceedingly simple and easy. This step is, indeed, often accompanied by great mental agitation and effort, and by a great confusion and variety of emotions, but these are quite foreign from the one act which is the precursor of all right actions, and the starting-point of a new life. This act is a mere exercise of the will; and the more calm and deliberate it is, the better, so the determination be hearty and decided. Every thing turns upon consenting to obey God, and submit unreservedly to his authority and instruction. All his entreaties and warnings seek to bring the sinner to this result. By such a submission to the divine claims the door is opened, and the Holy Spirit, hitherto a light shining from without, now enters into the soul, to abide there and accomplish the work of His proper mission and office. There was nothing that kept us away from God but a rebellious will. That has now confessed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and now there is no longer any barrier.

We do well to remember that the kingdom of heaven is

as a grain of mustard-seed. God apportions his gracious influences in accordance with this fundamental principle. He might convert us by irresistible power. He might overwhelm with influences, and blind with excess of brightness. But he acts otherwise. The dawn and the twilight succeed the darkness, and usher in the day. First the shoot, then the blade, then the full ear. The seed sown is the least of all seeds, and it *grows* to be a tree. It is the *quality* of the influence with which we are concerned. If it is from above, it is divine and able to save, and this is our proof of its heavenly source that it is as a grain of mustard-seed. The unconverted distrust their present calm convictions. They wait for such impulses as shall, by a sort of physical violence, break the bonds of sin, and drive them to Christ. This is a great delusion. Such is not the genius of the Gospel. Whoever feels his need of mercy, has light enough. Whoever is willing to submit to Christ, has awakening enough. It is time that he open his heart to receive the grace of God. It is time the grain of mustard-seed were planted, that it may grow and become a tree.

This characteristic of the Gospel has encouragement for the sincere Christian, and stern rebuke for the stationary and the unfruitful. It is no good ground for questioning the genuineness of a Christian's piety, because it is perceived by others, and felt by himself to be imperfect. Progress, and not perfection, is what the Gospel demands in those who have begun the race of piety. We are born into the kingdom. after the analogies of the human constitution, babes, and not men of full stature. The seed sown does not spring up at once a great tree, but becomes so by *growth*—by showers, by sunshine, and by the rough winds that howl among its branches and strain it to the root. Be content with God's method. You have in you the germ of greater things, and greater they shall become if you are true to your trust. Consecrate all to God; add your possessions to his vineyard, and

enter the field like a man, to bear the burden and heat of the day. Above all, trust in the efficacy of the grace of God. It is good seed that which he has sown in your heart, no matter how small. It contains, in embryo, a stately trunk, and goodly branches, and luxuriant foliage, and all manner of delicious fruit. Be content to toil and wait for the rising crop. In due time you shall gather it, if you faint not.

III. But the Gospel, whose genius is progress, and which therefore recognizes as true disciples the smallest and the weakest of those who grow in grace, does likewise enjoin progress as a Christian duty, and it disowns and stigmatizes as backsliders or hypocrites those who retrograde or remain stationary. Indeed, none are stationary. The seed which does not spring up soon loses its power of germinating, and perishes in the earth. The fig-tree which bears no fruit is doomed to be cut down as an encumbrance to the ground. Now how many of us there are who either make no advancement in piety, or who move so tardily that improvement is wholly imperceptible. Not a few seem to think that conversion and a decently moral life constitute the whole of Christianity, and insure its rewards. They live in a kind of trembling expectation of something better, but listless and inactive. Do they grow? Is the grain of mustard-seed waxing into a tree? If not, what sort of religion is theirs which will not comply with the usual condition of saving Christian piety? We meet with professors of religion who seem to have settled it with themselves that progress in piety is unnecessary or impracticable, and they dishonor the religion of Christ by lowering its ideal standard to their own attainments. Justification, they imagine—some even teach—is identical with sanctification, and that conversion places us in complete harmony with the divine will. What a strange perversion of the simple doctrine of Christ? Where, under such a faith, is the fight with principalities — the warfare against flesh and blood—the crucifixion of self?

IV. Our subject admonishes us to be indulgent and hopeful in forming our opinion of the piety of others. The tree does not spring up from the smallest of seeds, like Jonah's gourd, in a single night. Time is requisite for this goodly development and expansion of the hidden germ. The Christian virtues and graces may not all be equally mature. Some are of slower growth than others; some find a more congenial soil than others do in the same constitution. Be patient with your imperfect brother, even as your heavenly Father is patient toward you, waiting if peradventure you will bring forth fruit. It is ground of confidence and congratulation if he is diligent in the culture of gracious dispositions—if he is striving to add to his present attainments all the virtues which he now lacks, in their measure and order. Such efforts show how the intentions run; they indicate that the principle is there. Trust in the efficiency of that principle, and in it its final, complete triumph. Imitate the long-suffering of God, who *waiteth* to be gracious. It should ever be borne in mind that our religious course commences at our conversion. The good seed just then begins to grow. It is the spiritual birth, and in every well-ordered Christian character, childhood, and youth, and manhood follow in succession the spiritual as certainly as the natural birth. This introduction into a religious career is commonly attended with intense emotions, often with great joy; but whoever imagines that he has at once become a thorough, mature Christian, has fallen into a grievous, if not a dangerous error. He is only a raw recruit in the army of Christ. He has not as yet even put on the whole armor of righteousness, nor learned the use of his weapons. All his battles, whether defeats or victories, are still before him. Not a few estimate the depth of their piety by the strength of their early emotions. They have yet to learn what it is to crucify the deeds of the flesh—to die unto the world—to walk by faith—to count all things loss for Christ. As yet they are not able to bear this, but it shall

be revealed in due time. The good seed has been sown in their hearts, and has taken root. The green foliage, it may be the opening flowers, begin to appear. Well, the harvest is not yet. There is need of sunshine and showers—of summer and winter—of dews, and winds, and frosts, before the tender plant becomes a tree, and its fruits be formed and ripened.

V. The lessons of instruction and encouragement suggested by this subject have a natural and special application to those who are engaged in the Sunday-school enterprise. No class of laborers in our Lord's vineyard have more need of keeping their souls in patience, waiting for the "due time" when they shall reap, if they faint not. The Sunday-school teacher sows for a distant harvest. He must not expect always to see speedy results from his efforts. He begins with early childhood. Conversion and the formation of Christian character are too generally postponed to the dawn, if not the maturity of manhood, and this consummation of the Sunday-school labors is usually the immediate result of pulpit and pastoral efforts. That the success of the preacher is dependent, more, perhaps, than upon all other causes combined, upon the preparatory training of the Sabbath-school, he is ever the first to acknowledge; but when cause and effect are so far removed from each other, the connection between them is often lost sight of. The labors of the Sunday-school are peculiarly a work of faith, and there is special need of comprehensive observation, and thoughtful, calculating foresight, in order to prevent discouragement and relaxation. There is need that the teacher magnify his office and comprehend distinctly the vast influence which he exerts upon the entire prosperity of the Church. Thus will he be able both "to hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord."

The Sunday-school teacher preoccupies the soil with good seed, which would otherwise be impoverished and corrupted with a wild and noxious growth. I may not presume, in a city congregation, on much familiarity with the processes of

agriculture, but many of you have had opportunity to observe that a field left untilled is speedily covered with a luxuriant crop of thistles, briers, weeds, and tangled vines, at once exhausting to the soil and worthless for man or beast. The earth is filled with seeds which spring up spontaneously in the absence of cultivation; but if the field is sown with wheat or other grain, they are overshadowed and their growth suppressed. The analogy between a neglected field and a neglected mind is too striking and instructive to be left unnoticed because it is hackneyed. The minds of the young are sown already with corrupt seed, ready to spring up spontaneously and produce an abundant harvest of vices. There are two ways of dealing with this great evil. One is, to direct our attention to the noxious plants as they make their appearance, endeavoring to check their growth, to lop off their luxuriance, and, as far as possible, to pluck them up by the roots. This is as if the farmer should spend his time in cutting down or digging up the weeds and brambles that infest his fields, without attempting to raise any useful crop in their stead. The other method is that of the faithful Christian parent and Sunday-school teacher, who seek to store the mind with pure principles, and valuable and interesting knowledge, which may strike a deep root into the soul, and pre-engage its faculties and tastes, and so leave no refuge or welcome for low, debasing incitements and indulgences. Let no one imagine that this idea is no more than a figure of speech of no practical value. It is, on the contrary, a great practical truth—a maxim replete with the wisdom of all experience and all sound philosophy. Good is the only antidote or preventive of evil. You may choose, if you will, whether your children's minds shall be occupied with pure or with vicious sentiments, but you can not keep them unoccupied, nor can you anticipate or exclude the elements of evil but by a positive infusion of something better.

But it is not a negative benefit merely that the Sunday-

school confers on the rising generation. Its beautiful lessons —its Bible stories and parables—its simple, pure morals, become the element on which the mind itself grows and expands. Like the body, the mind derives its health and strength from the food it is nourished with. It becomes pure, and large, and lofty, when the thoughts with which it communes are of that character ; and it is debased, and darkened, and debauched by familiarity with low, sensual, and vulgar ideas. I think, with a delight bordering on rapture, of the army of children who, in this great and free country, are, from their tenderest years, familiarized with the facts and sentiments—with the history, the poetry, the biography, the ethics, and the doctrines of the Bible. With God's blessing, these Sunday-schools will make of us a noble people. Say what you will about common schools and popular instruction, they can not rear up a great and virtuous people without the Bible. Let the common school qualify your son to read, and your Sunday-school put him into communication with God's word, and you have a guaranty that common education may prove a common blessing, but none at all on any other terms. What avails such learning as the common school imparts, if its pupils are left to derive their sentiments, and opinions, and principles, and habits from the morality of the streets, from the purlieus of grog-shops and sixpenny theatres, from cheap novels and penny newspapers ? I am free to say, that I know of no reliable, comprehensive provision against the overflowing sources of corruption—none applicable, and likely to be applied, to that great class of young persons who most need our efforts, beside the system of Sunday-school instruction faithfully carried out to the full extent of its capabilities, and to the extent of the grievous want.

There is one aspect of the Sunday-school more impressive and important than this—its strictly religious aspect, its intimate connection with the salvation of souls. Sunday schools impart to the young that elementary acquaintance

with the Gospel which is an almost indispensable prerequisite to the successful preaching of the Gospel. A degree of knowledge must precede conversion. "How can they believe on him of whom they have not heard"—of whom they know nothing? The word of God is the sword of the Spirit. The preacher appeals to facts and doctrines presumed to be already understood, and predicates upon them all his arguments. This is the way to raise up a holy people. Let the children be brought forward in the nurture of the Lord, and then, when the anointed messenger comes, and the Holy Spirit is given, they will find the way made plain before them, and we may look confidently for such a succession of true revivals of religion as would be inconceivable without the Sunday-school. I think, under the more perfect working of the system, we may reasonably expect that a much larger proportion of the people will become pious. Only give us enterprising, indefatigable Christian teachers, and the leaven of the Gospel shall be made to spread through the entire rising generation.

Let me exhort teachers to be faithful to this great trust. God will require it at their hands. Strive to make instruction thorough—to make all comprehend the word of God, and to treasure it up in their thoughts. Do not be impatient, and fall into despair in regard to the dull and the inattentive. They have souls to save, and if they do not obtain some knowledge of the way, how is the indispensable work to be accomplished? They need your aid more than the ready learner. Never despair of them. Labor and pray on, till you make at least some deposit of truth in the mind and heart.

Again allow me to remind you that this system is capable of a wider application than it has ever yet received. Let every teacher feel that he has a mission to the neglected and the poor. Count it a glorious thing to look up a new scholar for the school. Go into the dark, desolate places—bring

out, in Christ's name—bring out the forgotten, unwashed sons and daughters of want and sin, and pour into their minds the light of truth. It is probably their only chance for heaven. How easy would it be to redeem the masses of this great city from one half of their sin and woe, if the Sabbath-school agency were plied to the utmost!

Let the Church remember that the Sunday-school is its right arm. Neither the pastor nor the official men will, if they are wise, look coldly upon the Sunday-school. It is the nursery from which tender plants are to be removed, by-and-by, into the Church. It is the feeder of the Church. It is the pioneer of the preached word. Never suffer the Sunday-school to want any thing for its complete efficiency. Better have preaching but half the time. Better have your church dimly lighted. As soon close your class-meetings. What you expend in this way is seed-wheat, which will return you some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred fold. If your Sunday-school teachers are faithful, be sure you have no more useful laborers, no line of operations that will pay better.*

Imagine to yourselves the probable history of one pupil of this school, gathered, we will suppose, from the haunts of poverty and sin. You begin with an ill-mannered, ignorant. ragged boy. He must be taught to read, and be clad, perhaps, in order to be made decent to come into the school. By diligent attention and teaching, this outcast becomes acquainted with the holy Scriptures. He is induced to go to church, and, in the end, becomes pious. Such cases fre-

* It will doubtless surprise those who have been in the habit of underrating the Sabbath-school enterprise, or who have given to it little attention, to learn, as we do from the Annual Report of the Sunday-school Union of our Church for the year 1850, that the number of conversions among the scholars has been, for the year 1847, 4118; for the year 1848, 8240; for the year 1849, 9014; making a total for three years of 21,372.

quently occur. It is an inconsiderable and a very ordinary event. I will not suppose any thing extraordinary. I have known such boys to become eminent ministers, who turned many to righteousness. I suppose this one to be no extraordinary genius—that he becomes an honest, working man, and an exemplary Christian. He becomes the head of a family, whom he trains up in the fear of God, and his children follow in his footsteps, and so on from generation to generation through the future. What do you think of the teacher who sought out the dirty boy and laid the foundation of all this well-doing? of these happy, pious families? of this succession of pious members in the Church? of these happy deaths, and this glorious accession to heaven's redeemed inhabitants? What does God think of such an act? How does it rank in his estimation? What a work is this for a common Christian to perform! How worth living for, ay, and dying for! Every teacher of you may confidently hope to do as much. Many have, no doubt, done much more, as the great day will reveal. Who will faint in such a field? Rather let every young man and woman be ambitious to win these laurels. Where else can they lay out their talent so well? In what other field can they sow with so good a hope of reaping a harvest? For, lo, "the kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; which, indeed, is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof."

XII.

CHRISTIANS EXAMPLES TO THE WORLD.

Do all things without murmurings and disputings that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life, that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain.—PHIL., ii., 14–16.

THE most important duties of religion are the most frequently inculcated, and on that account *trite*. To impress them on even pious people becomes a matter of peculiar difficulty. When we read of them in the Bible, it is often, from their familiarity, difficult to fix the attention upon them. It is well, when we may, to discuss this class of Christian obligations in connection with the high reasons on which they depend and the vital principles from which they spring. The subject of this discourse offers us its instruction under this special advantage. The faithful performance of Christian duty and the diligent cultivation of piety are enjoined by a reference to the Christian's proper office and function. *Christians are lights, or, rather, luminaries—light-givers.* They are *patterns* for others, "holding forth the word of life." *On this account* they are exhorted to fidelity and to the highest achievements of piety. Such, as I understand it, is the reasoning of the text.

I. In other parts of the Bible Christians are denominated, as they are here, the light of the world; and they are called upon to let their light shine: "Ye are the light of the world. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candle-stick, that it may give light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men that they may see

your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."* The language of our text, under the same figure, conveys a different lesson. It affirms that Christians *do shine* as lights of the world. They are its *actual* sources of illumination. They impart to the immortal souls around them such impressions as they get, and are likely to get, of religion and its duties. The mass of men do not go to the highest sources of information in forming their opinions on any subject. Many are not qualified for such investigations. Many more are too idle, or too busy with their own affairs, to give the requisite attention to any subject not forced upon them by their daily pursuits. They judge of other things on the reports of those no better qualified than themselves to form opinions, but who have, from some cause, been led to take an interest in them. In this way men form their opinions on the most important subjects. They choose their party in politics, not by any careful investigation of principles, but by their accidental associations—by the conduct and character of those with whom they happen to be acquainted or connected. A tyrant, or an oppressor, or a fop, in the guise of a public officer, or at the head of an industrial establishment, naturally repels from his party and opinions those who are in a position to be unfavorably affected by his disagreeable peculiarities, while the opposite virtues will prove more effectual than strong arguments and popular harangues in the work of convincing opponents and gaining adherents. It is under these silent influences, acting upon them spontaneously and freely, as sunbeams fall upon the eye, that men form their opinions of the character of individuals, of benevolent and literary institutions, of professions and classes. It is no reflection upon the intelligence or independence of men that they receive their impressions and form their opinions thus passively. They are but obeying the law of their being. They can not but be so acted upon by the men and the facts that surround

* Matth., v., 14–16.

them. They have not time, any more than inclination, to investigate for themselves each subject upon which they do and must form an opinion. All that I have affirmed of the *power of influence* in a lower sphere is specially and eminently true in regard to its agency in molding religious opinions. Without previous study or careful investigation, we find ourselves in possession of a religious creed by or before the dawn of manhood. Those who have never learned the catechism, nor enjoyed religious instruction in the Sunday-school, or in the church, or at home, do nevertheless find themselves indoctrinated, to a certain extent, in religious things. They have their fixed ideas in regard to what the Gospel is, and to what it requires. They have a certain standard, high or low, of Christian morality, and of practical and experimental piety—a standard, too, which is likely to remain with them, with modifications less or more considerable, through life. Multitudes have obtained the first principles of religion, they know not how, without effort or design on their part. They have caught them from the living Christianity around them. They have received them passively. They have been *reflected* upon them by their religious friends and neighbors. Just as they have formed their notions of the colors, and complexions, and forms of the material world in the light of the sun, which these objects have reflected upon the eyes of the beholder, so have they formed their ideas of the Gospel by the manifestations of its spirit by professed Christians. As the most symmetrical and beautiful forms, seen in a bad light, impress upon the eye a distorted image, so, when professed Christians, the appointed representatives of the Gospel—the lights of the world—Christ's luminaries for this dark sphere, shine dimly, or darkly, or not at all, are the religious sentiments of unconverted men degraded, distorted, or enfeebled, till they are no longer worthy of God or fit for man—till they are too gross to purify, and too weak and false to convert the soul. The world will believe, not

what the pulpit teaches, but what the Church *lives*. Its way to Christ and heaven is dark or luminous, just in proportion as the Church gives forth a clear or a doubtful light.

The following clause, "holding forth the word of life," changes the figure, but inculcates the same lesson. Our preaching announces the *theory* of the Gospel, but the practical piety of the Church must supply the illustrations and proofs of our doctrine. We can announce the principle, but yours it is to demonstrate it—to exemplify it, to show its practicability, its real application, its worth. Men are wont to bestow but little honor upon a mere theory. They want to know what it is worth in practice, and by that standard they estimate its value. We do not trouble ourselves to study the abstruse principles of art or science, but are eager to know its uses, and are ready to bestow our meed of admiration upon the philosopher who shows us the applications and utility of his discovery or his principles. We admire the genius and skill of the architect, but not till he can point out to us the goodly proportions, and graceful ornaments, and convenient apartments of some noble structure which exemplify his recondite theories. Few, comparatively, can be judges of the erudition and sagacity of a physician until they have been well tested by his practice, but all are ready to honor the medicine that has proved its efficacy by curing dangerous and inveterate diseases. I may leave these familiar illustrations to be applied by my hearers to the subject under discussion. I will only observe, in passing on to the farther elucidation of the text, that religion can not reasonably object to being judged by its fruits as they appear in its disciples. It is a complaint often, but unjustly made by us, that the world forms its estimate of Christianity by the imperfect lives of its professors, and not from the Bible, the unpolluted fountain of holy doctrine. It is sufficient to answer, that, constituted as men are, they can not but form their opinions of any theory claiming to be true and useful,

by its practical working. Now the Gospel professes to be a system of practical truths, designed for men in the present state, and destined to work great changes and meliorations in human character. If it fails of producing these improvements—if it turns out to be unadapted to the ends proposed—if men are not transformed, and made upright, and benevolent, and spiritual, under its operations, it is nothing worth as a system of religion. It may, like other fine-spun, ingenious theories, appear well in an essay or a harangue, but it is not fit for man. He must have a religion that lifts him up out of his depravity, and profligacy, and wretchedness, and makes him like God, or his doom is inevitable. No, we may not refuse to submit Christianity to this ordeal. To it Christ has intrusted his own honors. To it our ministry appeals: "Ye are our epistle, known and read of all men." We announce the proposition, your lives constitute the great, pregnant illustration and demonstration in the sight of heaven and earth. "Ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life."

II. Brethren, you now have a clear perception of the doctrine of our text. Let us proceed to the exhortation which the apostle deduces from it. Thus far we have been attempting to develop a strong motive to a spotless, self-denying Christian life. Your piety constitutes the world's standard of the Gospel. It is, in a very important sense, God's chosen instrument for convincing and saving sinners. Then do your duty well. Make a full proof of this ministry which Heaven has committed to you. Let men see in your examples a true, and a beautiful, and a powerful illustration of the religious system which Christ proclaimed in his ministry, and sealed with the blood of his cross. "Do ALL THINGS *without murmurings and disputings*," without grumbling and altercation. Do not dole out your obedience and your sacrifices as if afraid of going beyond the minimum of religion. Proceed upon a scale of large and generous liberality. Do

not act toward Christ as if you believed the old slander, "that he is an austere man, reaping what he has not sown, and gathering where he has not strewed." Inquire how much *can* I, not how little may I do. Nothing is more obvious than that many professors of religion gauge their piety to the lowest standard which they deem compatible with personal safety. They mean to avoid damnation, but they do not aim at any thing higher, or more than that. They fall into a style of religion which just keeps their hopes of heaven alive, and then bid defiance to every attempt to awaken and urge them on to better things. All arguments, all exhortations to higher attainments and performances, and to greater sacrifices, they treat with cool indifference, or taunt as the mere extravagance and declamation of the pulpit. The most convincing arguments and the most urgent exhortations leave them where they find them, satisfied with themselves, and firmly resolved neither to pray more, nor do more, nor give more. In their hearts they take sides against all extra fervor, and activity, and heart consecration, as savoring of novelty, and ultraism, and enthusiasm. I have said that a large class of professors pitch and keep their standard at the lowest point deemed compatible with salvation. Let us see what is the probable result of such a piety. In the first place, it does not lay its account with doing any positive, earnest thing for the salvation of others. Its "light" is not clear enough to guide or draw them—its example is too dubious and feeble to move or entice—it only provokes skepticism or contempt for the Gospel. If all Christians were of this stamp, all sinners would, in so far as depends on them, be damned. But what success is this frigid, meagre, selfish piety likely to have in taking care of itself. It works upon a minimum scale. It fixes its standard at the lowest point compatible with safety. It is universally true that the best of men fall below their own standard. This they do by a sort of moral necessity, for they are weak

and imperfect; while the Gospel rule is divine, and therefore perfect. Now, if the best Christians fail in satisfying the full measure of their purposes, are the lowest and feeblest likely to be more successful? more likely to walk invariably by the rule they have prescribed to themselves? And what if they fall below a standard which they have deliberately fixed at the lowest point known to saving Christianity? They are, if saints at all, the least of all saints. They make more false steps, are guilty of more negligences than others, and yet they are, at best, only a step above the line of demarkation between Christians and them who are no Christians at all. I submit, in all plainness and affection, to these moderate, cautious, amphibious disciples, who "murmur" at every new demand upon them, who "dispute" every inch of ground that conscience and Christ compel them to take in advance, that they are in a way which puts their salvation in perpetual jeopardy. They are ever upon the extreme edge of the thin, crumbling crust that covers a yawning, burning volcano. I ask them whether they can afford to trust their souls to the perils of a career which, if it does not lead to inevitable ruin, must be wholly made up of hair-breadth escapes?

But I wander from the true import of my text, which exhorts us to the cultivation of a lofty, earnest, unreserved, self-sacrificing piety, because such a piety is indispensable to the fulfillment of our function as lights of the world, as God's unordained but anointed ministers, appointed to hold forth the "word of life" for the salvation of others. In order to obtain qualifications requisite to the fulfillment of this mission are we exhorted to do all things without murmurings or disputings, that we may be "*harmless, blameless, without rebuke.*"

1. "HARMLESS." If we could accurately determine how large a proportion of professing Christians really contribute any thing toward the efficiency of the Gospel in the salvation of sinners, we should probably all be surprised at the

number of those who, in the language of political economy, are consumers, but not producers—who never attain to such fervency, and consistency, and activity as are necessary to awaken a sinner or strengthen a believer, while they have to be sustained, and helped, and really carried by the piety of the Church. Such halting, unfruitful Christians hardly expect to do much good, but it seldom occurs to them that they may be doing incalculable harm. And yet such is the teaching of our text, and we are called to a cheerful, hearty, unstinted performance of all Christian duties, if we even aspire so high as the negative virtue of being "harmless." "Do all things . . . . that ye may be harmless." There is impressive solemnity in the thought that every Christian has work allotted him which no one else will do or can do for him. He has a mission to fulfill which involves weal or woe to some others, and none but he can fulfill that mission. He is appointed to give light. If he withholds it, somebody is left in darkness through his fault. He is to hold forth the word of life. He is depended on for that duty. He actually does shine; he practically does set forth a Christian example; such light and such examples as they are, for evil it may be, for evil we know they are, if he does not do his duty faithfully. Now it were far better that a sinner should never know a professor of religion, than to come under the influence of one of no vitality and power. If left wholly without bad specimens of Christianity, he might perhaps resort to the fountain-head for his estimate of the Gospel; at least, he would not be disgusted with the pure waters of life by the beverage commended to his loathing appetite in the name of Christ. A Christian of the type I have described is as a sentinel who sleeps at his post, and so endangers the whole army by this betrayal of his trust. He is as a watchman who leaves his post of observation, or nods upon it while the city is in flames. A Church made up of such members is precisely the most insuperable obstacle to a revival of re-

ligion. It quenches and repels the Holy Spirit. It chills and disheartens the preacher. Better for him to stand alone, as Paul did on Mars' Hill, or as Henry Martyn did in the metropolis of Persia. Then the preacher knows there are none but God and his enemies near, and acts accordingly.

2. "BLAMELESS." It were no doubt a great improvement upon the actual condition of the Church if all its members were *harmless*—were so consistent in their Christian course as to bring no reproach upon the cause of Christ, and to present no obstacle in the way of the propagation of the Gospel. How many feeble believers would be saved, who are now seduced from their integrity by lax examples and associations! How many sinners would be converted, who are now confirmed in their impenitence and neglect of religion by seeing so many professors no more circumspect, no more spiritual, no less worldly than themselves! Still, we must confess, that to be *harmless* merely constitutes a very degraded type of piety. If Christians are to aspire no higher than this mere negative virtue, we may well inquire, what is to become of the world? The salvation of sinners requires a great outlay of *positive* power. They tend to evil. They have a natural proclivity to sin and to hell, and it only requires that they be let alone, that the Church should content itself with doing no harm, in order to insure the ruin of the world. We are, therefore, to be BLAMELESS as well as harmless. We are to beware of the guilt of so low a style of living as shall merely do no injury to others. Their case is so bad as to require remedies—positive interferences. We are their dependence in their great moral exigency—are the lights by which their sliding steps are to be turned away from the gates of hell. We are to *hold forth the word of life;* not to wait till we are importuned for counsel and help, but to thrust religion upon them by the lustre of our piety—by the energy of our godly examples, and the melting ardors of our expostulations and entreaties. Not to do all this—not to do it

habitually and perseveringly, is to be guilty of a high crime against immortal souls—is to be blameworthy to a degree which human language is not adequate to express. The word which in our text is *blameless*, should rather be rendered *unmixed* or *unadulterated*, SINCERE; and it implies that high degree of piety, far above mere *harmlessness*, which is necessary for a right performance of our duty as lights of the world—as pattern Christians appointed to "hold forth the word of life." For the due fulfillment of this function, nothing less will do than a profound, unreserved consecration to God — a piety so thorough and universal as will make itself *felt* by all within its sphere. We are not always on our guard. We know not how we are appearing to beholders at all times and in our unguarded moments. Our only security against failures in this high duty, against doing infinite harm to souls, is to be found in that absolute, unreserved piety which burns and shines incessantly. We ought ever and unconsciously to give out this Christian light, so that all around us will be compelled to receive its beams, just as the sun in his career pours forth a tide of effulgence so plenteous and brilliant that all dark places are visited and illumined—all living things penetrated by its warmth, and bathed in its radiance.

3. "WITHOUT REBUKE." The language of our text puts forth a yet higher demand upon those to whom the illumination and conversion of this dark, wicked world are intrusted. Not satisfied with being "*harmless and blameless*," terms which, as we have seen, imply no ordinary piety, they are to be "*without rebuke*"—unrebukable in the midst, even, of this captious, watchful, unjust world. They must, in this high duty, "avoid the appearance of evil." In order to this, they must put forth the most strenuous exertion in doing good. It must be their aim perpetually to promote the salvation of souls. I am unable to perceive how the depository of such a trust can clear himself of just reproaches, if he

neglect any opportunity of leading a sinner to Jesus—of enlightening or instructing the ignorant, of warning the impenitent, of helping onward in his course the feeble, tempted soul. I appeal to the conscience of every Christian whether he can esteem himself above just censure and merited rebuke so long as he shall omit to use all his influence and talents for the promotion of religion? In such a world of guilty, perishing souls, can he be innocent who abandons one sinner to die in his transgressions?

III. THE REASONS on which these exacting demands upon us are founded I stated at the outset. They spring necessarily from our relation to the scheme of recovering grace. We are appointed *to hold forth the word of life—to illuminate the world.* This comprehensive, massive argument, however, is presented by our text in some of its minor propositions, on which it may be profitable for a few moments to meditate.

1. "Ye are the children of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation." Much may reasonably be demanded from those who are honored with such a parentage. Their blood is presumed to be untainted. Their training has been of the best. They are familiar with the divinest models of all virtues and excellences. They act under the sublimest motives and for the most glorious rewards. They are God's representatives in this dark world. He points to them as his sons and daughters, and challenges the scrutiny of friend and foe. He says of them, "These are my jewels"—these are they who shall reign with me in white. "And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth; a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil?"*

As the sons of God, we bear with us an infallible standard of all purity and all piety. We bear his image, which the sinner has lost. This we are ever to exhibit before men, to remind them of what they have lost; to provoke their ad-

* Job, i., 8.

miration, and show them perpetually the one passport which will admit them into heaven. *As God's sons*, we are presumed to sympathize with his interests, and sentiments, and designs. We know his love for sinners and his intense zeal to save them. We are presumed to recognize, as part and parcel of our family concerns, the outlay of suffering, and effort, and blood made by Him who is our elder brother, and through whom we receive the inheritance. O! we can not think of ourselves as children of God without recognizing obligations of infinite strength and sacredness to become coworkers with him in saving sinners. We long to do his will. We burn to testify our filial gratitude. We pant for opportunities to show forth his praise, to dazzle the world's eye with the lustre of his honors, to shame the world's impenitence by the proclamations of his grace.

2. The sons of God represent him and his cause in the midst "OF A CROOKED AND PERVERSE NATION," in the midst of rebels and enemies, by whom his will is neglected and his honor contemned. They go astray from their youth. They perpetually deviate from right paths; and to themselves and others represent God as a hard master, and his ways as unequal. It is the fearful declaration of the Scriptures, that they hate God, and desire not a knowledge of his ways. They not only will not come to the light, that their deeds may be made manifest and reproved, but they "hate the light." They strenuously object to the interference of Christians for their salvation. The tendency of such a course is manifest. It is to utter darkness and depravity. But for the presence of Christian truth and example among them, sinners would inevitably degenerate into Atheists or idolaters. All history goes to establish the truth of this assertion. This swift decline to the worst corruption is checked by the presence of the pious, who are "the salt of the earth." And God depends upon them to interpose effectual remedies. Their light and their moral resources are the appointed antidote. They

are to illustrate in the presence of the wanderer — in the midst of a crooked generation—the strait and narrow way that leads to life. They are to pour the light of truth upon blind eyes that will not choose to see. They are assiduously to hold up the perfect standard of the Gospel before the profligate multitude, who shrink away from it as from a gorgon dire. The sinner, in his perversity and strange infatuation, strives against the manifestation of the truth. He would fain extinguish the luminary that offers its beams to cheer his dark path. He says, "Away with your obtrusive light. I see nothing but pitfalls now; but I shall walk very securely, provided you will only leave me in the dark. I can then stride safely over this thin crust that holds me out of hell." But the sons of God may not heed such expostulations. They are here for the very purpose of irradiating this dark region. The more their function is contemned and hated, the more it is needed. They have their orders from heaven, to which they are guides. Every Christian has a torch in his hand, from which he flashes light upon unwilling no less than willing eyes. He symbolizes Christ's compassion, which covets intimacy with the sorest maladies, and he plucks the devil's captives away even as brands from the burning, out of the very edge of hell.

3. I have already sufficiently developed the argument and the duty inculcated in the fundamental proposition of the text, "Ye do shine as lights, holding forth the word of life." I will only add, that a portion of this moral power intrusted to us for the salvation of sinners is embarked upon every Christian act and effort. The consistent religious life, the holy conversation, the stern integrity in business, the active benevolence, the whole godly example of the true disciple, are all so many media through which light and conviction are conveyed to the consciences of the ungodly. Still more, perhaps, when they bear with them the sanctions of an unquestionable sincerity, are the directly religious performances of true Chris-

tians clothed with various measures of divine efficacy. The honest reproof, the faithful warning, the affectionate expostulation, the visit to the sick-bed, the prayer, the song of praise, the holy sacrament—these, and other properly religious acts, are mighty, through God, in their influence upon human and immortal destinies. Every Christian does well to remember that upon the faithful performance of these duties depends, not only the well-being of the Church and of the souls that compose it, but, to a great extent, the maintenance of those influences upon which hangs the conversion of wicked men. Faithfully and spiritually performed, our religious duties are endowed with power from on high. Neglected altogether, or coldly and negligently performed, they are not only powerless and useless, but constitute chief hinderances in the way of religion. An assembly of holy men and women, gathered for prayer, and fellowship, and holy communion with Father, Son, and Spirit, in the full exercise of faith and charity, constitutes by far the most powerful agency for convincing and converting ungodly men known to the arrangements of Christ upon earth. With even two or three so met and so employed Christ meets, and asks what they wish within the compass of the Church's wants, and Christ's veracity is pledged to grant it. Now by how much these and kindred Christian duties are powerful for good, by so much is their neglect or malperformance to the last degree pernicious. This sacred convocation, which can call down Heaven's energies, must reverence its own institution. It must woo and adore this divine presence. It must not lightly forsake this assembling together, as the manner of some is. If the first call of business or of pleasure is sufficient to detain the Christian from the sanctuary—if the first cold or cloudy day leaves half its seats vacant, then is the lie effectually given to the entire theory of God's special presence and special blessing, and proclamation is made by every absentee, louder than a thousand denials, that religion and its duties are not, after all,

especially important, and that, in your judgment, it is safer to neglect Church on Sunday than your business on Monday. Let no one doubt that such examples are deeply impressive. They shine with a most bewildering glare upon the world. They hold forth no dubious intimations of the real state of piety that prevails, and are of power to counteract the efficacy of many sermons. The professor of religion who conforms to all Christian moralities, and yet neglects the means and institutions of grace recognized in his church covenant, plants an effectual barrier between the most faithful preaching and the sinner's conscience. The man who, by professing religion, takes it upon him to represent and hold forth the Gospel, becomes a part of its recognized agency, and he must keep himself in harmony with the entire machinery, or its action will be obstructed. A careless, irreverent, staring, slumbering Christian worshiper always fills me with dismay. He is a non-conductor in the electric circle along which religious sympathies, and with them divine influences, are wont to flow. I cease to expect much good from any effort of the preacher. The man, for the chilling, paralyzing influence of his somnolency or his vacuity, might as well stand up in the aisle, and announce to sinners that the business on hand is not so very important, after all—not very urgent at present, and easily managed when they are ready to enter upon it.

4. This view of the subject is followed by a distinct and most impressive argument for zeal and fidelity in the last member of my text—"That I may rejoice, in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain." On this I may not dwell at any length. Paul trembled for the entire result of his ministry, if the Church should fail in this essential co-operation. Preaching could effect nothing, if Christians did not let their light shine, and hold forth the word of life. Their own salvation is put in jeopardy, if they fail in fulfilling their appropriate duties; for it is a law impressed upon every part of God's universe, that whatever will

not work, and satisfy its proper function, decays and dies. But outside the boundaries of the Church, all must be desolation and darkness beyond the sphere of its light and the efficacies of its example. The apostle's hope of heaven grew dim in the contemplation of such a possible recreancy. His knowledge, his eloquence, his miracles, his mission to the third heavens, with its revelations, were to be defeated and dishonored, if the Church should betray its trust. Without its prayers and spiritual efficiency, the Word of God would no longer be quick and powerful—the Gospel would no longer be the power of God unto salvation—Christ would have died in vain. All this is clearly implied in the words I have quoted.

I make two inferences.

1. It is a serious, as well as a glorious thing, to be a Christian. The weight of the Church's responsibility is incalculable.

2. Each individual is answerable for the efficacy of the Gospel. He can not shake off the burden by neglect, or forgetfulness, or even by backsliding.

XIII.

THE BREVITY OF MAN'S PROBATION.

Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you; for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.—JOHN, xii., 35, 36.

THIS exhortation was delivered by our Lord in view of his own departure from the world, and only a few days before that event. His triumphant entry into Jerusalem amid a multitude of admiring, applauding followers, while it increased the alarm and exasperated the enmity of the Jewish rulers,

had excited a more intense and wide-spread curiosity to witness his miracles and listen to his teachings. The eager inquiries of some Grecian proselytes, who had come up to the feast of the Passover, led to the announcement of the text. To them, or perhaps to the apostles through whom they had made application to Jesus for an audience, he abruptly declared the near approach of his death, which was necessary to the fulfillment of his mission. This was wholly at variance with their preconceived notions of the Messiah, whose reign, according to the Jewish Scriptures, was to be perpetual. Without stopping to explain so grave a difficulty, our Lord admonished them of the importance of improving the brief period in which they might still profit by his instructions. "Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you; for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth."

The irreligious usually think of only two of the conditions on which their conversion is suspended—the greatness of the divine mercy, and their own free agency—and these conditions they are ever wont to consider as in their own power. As God is unchangeable and of an infinite compassion, they imagine that they may certainly rely upon his readiness to save whenever they shall conclude to accept of the divine assistance. The movement of their own will, which is the other condition to be satisfied, is confessedly within their own control, so that the concurrence on which so much depends appears a matter of very easy attainment, about which there is no pressing demand for either great haste or great solicitude. As God is deemed to be always in readiness to receive the returning penitent, and it is the sinner's own business to repent, he has the matter very much in his own hands, and may properly choose the most convenient time for the beginning of his new career. Now our text fully recognizes both of these fundamental conditions. It is an explicit tender of God's help, and an avowed appeal to man's free agency, and

yet it refers to other facts of great efficacy and moment in the working out of a sinner's salvation. It teaches us that time is both an essential and a vanishing element in this process. It refers to very material contingencies, on which a sober-minded man will ponder much before deciding that it may be safe, by a summary and indefinite postponement, to dispose of a question so important as that which our ministry is ever pressing upon him.

It has always struck me as not a little remarkable, that our Savior's ministry should have been confined to a period so brief as two and a half, or, at most, three years. He did not commence it till he was thirty years of age, though endowed with all human and divine resources for the fulfillment of his high mission. When but a child, his wisdom and eloquence excited the profound astonishment of the Jewish doctors. Why the commencement of his active labors was postponed for so many years after his arrival at manhood, surrounded as he was by such pressing spiritual wants, is a question that can only be referred to the sovereign will of God. So it seemed good in His sight, "who worketh all things according to the counsels of his own will." And then, how brief a period was that of his actual ministry for the accomplishment of the vast designs of the Christian dispensation—for laying the foundations of a universal kingdom destined to triumph over all earthly powers and all diabolical opposition! How few, comparatively, had been permitted to listen to the Savior's message! How very narrow was the sphere of his activities, who yet came to be the Savior of the world! He had made, at the time under consideration, but a handful of disciples, and yet his race was nearly run, and his ministry almost accomplished. In proportion as the time was short, it was precious to those who had not yet accepted of him. The greater their former negligence, the more urgent their present necessities. "Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light,

lest darkness come upon you." Not God's plenitude of mercy—not the ability of sinners to repent, but the brevity and rapid flight of time, was the Savior's argument with the unconverted Jews. God is indeed ready to save. Men may indeed become religious, but not without reference to something farther—not at all times alike. These great facilities are constantly losing their value to him who neglects to use them. The sinner is perpetually tending to a point when both will be worthless to him. His heaven and earth are constantly passing away. His destiny hastens to its accomplishment. With his free will, and his power to become a Christian, he is moving away from God and his mercy, and so the chances for the needful co-operation are steadily diminishing.

"Yet a little while is the light with you." That was the Savior's argument with the impenitent Jews, and shall be ours. It is startling to think upon the proverbial brevity of human life, when we recollect that a lifetime is the very longest period that can be given to the working out of our salvation. Think of the greatness of the work to be done, and of the magnitude of the interests involved in doing it well. The conformity of our low, sinful nature to the divine image—preparation for ETERNITY—these are the ends set before us in the Gospel. To say nothing of the great work of moral transformation that must be accomplished, let us contemplate the interests, future and eternal, for which we are called to labor. Men cheerfully devote years of preparation, of practice, and study, to the acquisition of the trade or profession by which they are to obtain their livelihood in the world. If we apply this analogy to the pursuits and enjoyments of eternity, for which our lifetime constitutes the entire career of preparation and probation, how short, how inadequate do threescore years and ten appear in contrast with the endless, blessed duration of which they may constitute the dawn and the introduction!

But men very much overrate their prospects, and the duration of their season of trial, when they calculate on this, the longest period through which human life is wont to be protracted. Many years have already passed away before we reach the point where the work of *voluntary* preparation for heaven commences. Childhood, under the tutelage of pious parents, is indeed a season of inestimable value, in reference to the formation of religious character, but in regard to the most of those who have advanced into active life without piety, it has been so misimproved as to be something worse than useless. Through want of careful culture, habits have been formed and ideas imbibed which are now the chief obstacles to conversion—which constitute the identical reasons why the sinner remains impenitent. The closing years of a protracted life are usually even less valuable for the purposes of our moral probation than those of neglected childhood and youth. The foundations of piety are seldom laid later than in middle life. A religious career is, indeed, *sometimes* commenced in old age; but such instances are so rare as to constitute exceptions, which in no way affect our argument. In a vast majority of individuals—I think in full nine instances in ten—conversion occurs between twelve or fifteen, and thirty or thirty-five years of age; so that we may regard twenty years, and not threescore and ten, as, practically, the term of probation. Numbers become pious earlier and later than the epochs referred to; but we are to regard the general results of the past in measuring our expectations for the future. What has been will reappear in the history of the present and of coming generations. There is no certain limit to God's mercy. There is no restriction here upon human agency; but these, we may be sure, will continue to develop results similar, for the most part, to those already exhibited. Old age, we may be confident, will never be a favorable season for conversion. Of those who pass away their youth and early manhood in impenitence, few will afterward become pious. The period

we have indicated, which intervenes between childhood and mature manhood, must ever constitute *the day* of probation —"the little while" in which "the light is with us." After that the shades begin to appear, so that he that walketh knoweth not whither he goeth. Then cometh the night, when no man can work.

I have already adverted to perhaps the most common ground of procrastination in religion, the sinner's confidence in God's continued willingness to save him, and I mention it again to show the utter insufficiency of such a trust. God's mercy, indeed, does not change, but *our relations to it may*, which will have the same effect upon our prospects for eternity. I am not aware that any expect God to show any *special* favoritism toward those who persevere in impenitence. The man who refuses obedience to-day can not reasonably expect that more helps and higher rewards will be offered him to-morrow. On the contrary, the Bible always admonishes us that, by every day's delay, our condition is made essentially worse. Not only is the probability that we shall become Christians diminished, but it is absolutely impossible to become as holy and happy as we might have been by an earlier devotion of the heart to Christ. *To-day* is ever the accepted time, and the day of salvation. *To-day*, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart. The entire volume of holy writings does not contain an intimation that any future time will be more favorable to repentance than the present moment. As we are under the most sacred obligation to cease at once to sin against God, so his grace is pledged to aid a present religious movement, but not at all to a postponed one. Not only is guilt involved in every day's postponement, but both risk and certain loss. We multiply the chances against being converted at all, and at the same time impair irretrievably our future piety, should we yet come to a better mind, and turn away from our sins. But I have no need of so strong an argument. Let us sup-

pose no more than that God will not favor the sinner with special grace in proportion to his neglect and opposition in reference to that already given, and we have the ground for a most instructive conclusion. By the most favorable view of the case, then, the gracious influence remains the same. At least, it does not become stronger in indulgence to the sinner's opposition; but the case of the impenitent becomes, meantime, constantly more inveterate, and of more difficult treatment. The causes which render a divine interposition necessary are gaining strength perpetually. The fundamental difficulty is this, "The natural heart is enmity against God." This is a universal malady; though, through the grace of God, we often see the young, who have been consecrated to the Savior with faith and prayer, transformed into the divine image by a process so gentle and imperceptible as almost to seem the result of natural development. In the irreligious, however, this enmity gains strength with the progress of years, and ramifies, by a thousand roots and branches, through the whole moral character. This it does, like the other propensities of our nature, by a spontaneous growth. But what it chiefly concerns us in this place to consider, this hostility to God is perpetually exasperated in the conflicts of the unregenerate heart with the claims of the Gospel. We grow displeased, angry, and indignant, and at last incurably alienated in regard even to our best friends, who are forever reproaching us with follies and vices, and, though confessedly guilty, we are indisposed to reform. Thus we act unavoidably, and by the laws of our nature; for we can not long remain wholly passive under these accusations. We must place ourselves in an attitude more compatible with ease and self-respect. We must resist or submit. So it is in the controversy of the impenitent with the Gospel. Its urgent, uncompromising, and reiterated demands irritate their feelings. Their hearts are not subject to the law of God, neither indeed *can* be. They *will* not have this man to reign over them. Appeals to con-

science are regarded as intrusions, distasteful and impertinent, till at length the preacher, and his message, and his Master, are ranked among the spoilers of innocent pursuits and pleasures. Now what are the moral forces by which all this increasing opposition to religion is to be overcome? If our continuance in sin has not the effect to conciliate God's favor and insure larger bestowments of grace, then our position has become practically worse under this system of procrastination.

But not the enmity of the heart alone—our other spiritual foes have grown stronger by the delay. The love of the world has obtained a more powerful dominion over us, and so long as we love the world, the love of the Father is not in us. We become connected with the world by more and more powerful ties. A taste for wealth, or honor, or luxury, or ease has been cultivated. Self has been pampered, pride engendered or fostered.

At the same time that the antagonist sentiments have made such progress, those favorable to religion have lost a portion of their force and authority. The moral feelings, especially, have grown blunt under the repeated acts of violence perpetrated against them. The sense of duty is no longer clear and unambiguous. The responses of conscience are more feeble and less authoritative. What is hardly less deplorable, the sinner loses all self-reliance. He has violated his pledges and resolutions, till he lacks the moral courage either to vow or to resolve. He feels himself oppressed with an imbecility of purpose, and a sinking of heart, under which the beginning of religious action becomes well-nigh impracticable. I will not affirm that I have described a progress common to all impenitent sinners who have neglected many invitations, but I am sure I have pointed out a common tendency, and a not uncommon experience, which, in some form and to some degree, many will recognize as their own.

So far I have supposed that the positive agencies, by which

the Gospel urges itself upon the sinner's acceptance, remain unimpaired in their strength and activity. And yet, under this most favorable supposition, we have seen the condition of the unrepenting sinner become worse and worse. His salvation is made increasingly difficult by growing hostility to God, and growing attachments to the world—by blunted moral perceptions, and by confirmed habits of procrastination, and bad faith toward his own convictions and secret vows. A state of things is thus induced which manifestly requires a great increase of external influence in order to counteract so many new or strengthened elements of opposition to God. But we are not at liberty to stop here. We can not concede so much. We are compelled to add, that while the forces opposed to religion are constantly acquiring new power, the favoring influences do not gain a corresponding vigor—they do not even remain stationary, but gradually decline in their intenseness and efficiency, so that, while resistance to God is constantly accumulating strength, the only counteracting agencies are losing it. This is alike true of the providential and the spiritual agencies employed in bringing men to repentance.

Temporal blessings are designed as means of grace. God would by them impress us with a lively sense of his goodness. He would awaken our gratitude, and provoke our love, and encourage our obedience. And these are the effects of God's providential favors bestowed upon pious souls. Upon the impenitent, however, manifestations of the divine benevolence are wholly lost as to any religious influence, and they exert an additional and positively evil influence in promoting the love of the world, and in inducing the unsanctified mind to be satisfied with sensual, perishing enjoyments. The light is thus turned into darkness—incitements to piety into the temptations and the facilities of sin. Adversities and chastisements also, always sent as messengers of good to wean us from the world and its seductions, and

to awaken longing desires after the uninterrupted enjoyments of heaven, produce, in their operations upon the unconverted, results of quite an opposite character. They are apt to sour the feelings and harden the heart. They lead to repining, and discontent, and bitter complaints—to the arraignment of God's goodness, and equity, and impartiality, or to a practical atheism which excludes all divine supervision and agency from a world so constantly disturbed with untoward and disastrous events.

When such sentiments become habitual, when God's mercies and judgments are alike misinterpreted and misimproved, the mind, it is obvious, is closed against a class of agencies not only very efficient, and adapted to our condition in this world, but much relied on in the divine administration as means of religious impression and moral training.

Only one more disaster greater than this remains to befall the impenitent sinner, and that is likely to follow as the unerring effect of so many potent causes. The Holy Spirit is the great agent acting through all the subordinate agencies by which the soul of man is enlightened, sanctified, and saved. By the working of the affections, by the testimonies of conscience, by the ministries of the sanctuary, and by the operations of Providence, prosperous or adverse, does the Holy Spirit strive with men, to turn them from their sins to the living God. The divine agent pours light upon every mind, but never converts or sanctifies a soul but with its own consent and concurrence. His presence and operation within us renders our own efforts effectual to moral ends. He is ever ready to encourage, to enlighten, to comfort, to assist; but indifference grieves, and opposition insults him. Now the great evil and danger of procrastination are in its relations to the Holy Spirit. It always retards, and in the end effectually checks his work. Carried to the extent to which the impenitent is always tending, it expels the Spirit from the soul, which is henceforth doomed to darkness and ruin.

This is the ultimate result; but the evil and the danger exist in many degrees, which to mark distinctly it would be necessary that we should know precisely the spiritual condition of men. It is sufficient for us to know that all sin, and especially that all postponement of repentance, and all opposition to religious convictions, tend to weaken the Spirit's influence within the soul, and obscure the light which he pours upon it. Carried to a certain point, these sins put an end to this agency altogether, and extinguish this light. That point once reached, salvation becomes impossible, because there is no longer any place for the play of its agencies and the fulfillment of its conditions. There is no longer any light, and "he that walketh in darkness, knoweth not whither he goeth."

Without dwelling with greater fullness or particularity upon this awful subject, I invite your attention to one incidental allusion in our text. This walking or groping in darkness suggests the idea of religious efforts made in the absence of religious light, after the divine manifestation has become wholly extinct, or, rather, too dim to guide us. A most pitiable and fearful condition is here set forth, though, we have reason to suspect, no very uncommon case. The light of the Spirit is usually withdrawn by gradual and imperceptible degrees, as the sinner advances in hardness of heart, and in the blindness of unbelief. He may often retain, under such circumstances, a very clear view of what is right with very little disposition to do it. It may often happen, too, that, under some pressure of outward circumstances or of felt inward wants, he may have a strong wish to secure the advantages of piety, even after the perversion of his moral powers and his dim spiritual manifestation are little favorable to any Christian movement. This is a case of which I think I see an intimation in our subject, and a case most deplorable it unquestionably is. A man has spent his best days in sin, resisting much divine influence, and fairly thrusting out

the Holy Spirit from his soul. In the sequel, without becoming a better man or really more friendly to the Savior, he experiences a want which the world can not satisfy. His passions are perhaps tamed by age—his powers of sensual enjoyment pretty well exhausted and benumbed. Religion, it may be, has become popular, and so has lost its most objectionable feature in his estimation, and he concludes to promote his respectability or happiness, or to quiet his conscience, or to appease his fear of death by becoming a Christian. There may even be in the movement some degree of sincerity and earnestness. Nothing in the world can be more erratic, unsatisfactory, and unfruitful, than the efforts which such persons often make in their new enterprise. What crude ideas do they express! What strange views of the plan of salvation do they embrace—what contradictions! They seem to beat the air. They appear to have lost all proper conception of the relations of religious ideas—of cause and effect—of antecedent and consequent. They grope in dim twilight, and attempt to walk when there is no vision. Men well instructed in early life in religious truth, and in the plan of salvation, fall into the grossest errors. They adopt a system of forms, or of visions and empty speculations. I have known men of strong, cultivated minds, who seemed on this subject alone bereft of all the attributes of reason and intelligence.

I think, too, we often find the victims of this retributive delusion among nominal, backslidden professors of religion—men who have been long in the Church, and familiar with the duties of religion, but who have lost its spirit and power, without being fully, if at all, aware of it. You shall see in such persons the strange union of regular religious observances, and much zeal for the Church, with indomitable worldliness, severity of spirit, and even relaxation of morals, an incongruity which they seem not to perceive, any more than to suspect the genuineness of a piety so long professed, and sanctioned by so many decent observances.

1. Walk while you have the light, and so keep off darkness. Co-operate with the light. The feeblest manifestation will lead the true-hearted into clear day. This is God's economy. Use, and receive more. To him that hath shall be given. Move toward the light; the slightest conviction, such as you all have had or have, is enough to lead on the dawn of a day that shall never end.

2. Believe in the light while you have it. Trust in any, the smallest of God's manifestations; they contain the germ of all good things. Be willing to know your whole duty as well as your whole privilege, and act upon these intimations liberally and honestly. It is the only way to become real Christians—children of the light.

XIV.

THE WIDOW'S TWO MITES.

And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury. For all they did cast in of their abundance, but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.—MARK, xii., 41–44.

SINCE it has become so customary to solicit and to make pecuniary contributions for religious objects, conscientious Christians have come to feel the greatest solicitude to perform this duty on strictly Christian principles, and their attention has been drawn much more than formerly to an examination of these principles. It is not always easy to determine the reason why the prosecution of the divine plans is left dependent on such means and agencies as they are. It was not so at the beginning. Then much more was accomplished by miraculous interpositions. The apostles and early

preachers, for example, were miraculously endowed with a knowledge of all the languages of the people to whom they bore the Gospel. Now we are subjected to the laborious and tedious process of studying the Gentile languages, of translating and printing books, of establishing schools, &c.

Then the apostles were forbidden even to "take money in their purse, or to take two coats apiece;" their supplies came from the people to whom they preached, or from some source not particularly mentioned. It would be as easy now as it was then for God to provide in this way for the exigencies of his cause. He who deposited money in the mouth of a fish to pay the tribute to Cæsar's tax-gatherer, could open mines richer than those of Mexico for the support and spread of his religion. He could open the hearts of kings, or of the heathen themselves, to defray the cost of converting all nations. Why does a merciful God lay burdens on his people, often poor, to accomplish his work, rather than follow out the original plan? This I suppose to be the reason of the change: there was, at the first, no Church to be honored and profited by doing this great work for Christ. Now there is, and it is for the promotion of our piety, and happiness, and sanctification, and the strength of our moral energies, that the day of miracles has given place to a day of sacrifice, and faith, and love. It may not always be easy to perceive the utility of the duties to which we are thus called, but I think it is usually obvious enough. All our labors and gifts are so much fruit by which God is glorified, and so much spiritual discipline to train us for holiness and heaven. (The missionary to China an example for the utility of the study of tongues.)

If it be true that God, for the good of his Church, makes it the great instrument of promoting his designs on the earth, we must expect to be called out more and more to this work. We are to meet it as a great abiding duty, and it is of the highest importance to understand the true grounds of our

duty—the true principle and spirit of this feature of the divine economy. I know of no portion of holy Scripture better adapted to instruct us on this point than the beautiful narrative I have chosen for my theme.

1. It is manifest that the value of the poor widow's gift to the Lord's treasury did not depend on the amount. In that view it was not more, but less than all. In God's plan, however, little or much may be equally effectual. He makes the greatest events turn on the smallest. The widow's oil fed the prophet, for whom, previously, the ravens had brought food. God, on one occasion, would not allow a large army to conquer. He may choose as he will—may work by much or little, many or few.

The spirit of the gift gave it its value with God. The action is like the motive in quality, and God estimates its value also by the motive. This gift of "two mites" as fully recognized God's right as would the gift by a king of his kingdom. It was more than all the rich men gave, because it more fully recognized this right. Men claim all they have for their own. They forget that they are stewards. This is the great evil, and may exist with equal force in rich or poor. Wherever it exists, and to whatever extent, it is the antagonist of religion. It is, indeed, the very germ of atheism. If God has not a perfect right to us and ours—a right to use us at his will—to take away as well as to give at his pleasure, then we and our possessions are not his—he is not our Creator and lawgiver. So far as we are concerned, he is not God. Never had God's claim a more perfect and hearty recognition than in this poor widow's gift. She conceded it to the utmost, and her gift was the greatest and the most acceptable of all brought to the treasury of the temple. God's right may be fully recognized in giving a part, and holding the rest at his disposal; but here the recognition was perfect and manifest.

2. The widow's gift was a great *act of faith*, which is of

inestimable value. God loves to be trusted. He loves to see manifested a filial and fearless reliance on his promises, providence, and grace. This imparts unspeakable excellence to all the services done. The largest liberality, without faith, is only a worldly act. The smallest, with faith, is in the high est sense religious. Now this poor widow gave the highest proof of her confidence in God. She gave to him *all her living*. She literally "took no thought for the morrow." She said, by her act, "God will provide;" "I am not afraid to trust God." She cast into the treasury the coin that would have bought the bread for her next meal. It was a glorious act of faith. It was, in its kind, like that of the Israelites when they entered the wilderness to starve, if heaven should not rain manna; or when they entered the Red Sea to perish, if God should not open the deep waters. It was like the faith of Abraham, when he raised his hand to slay the son of his old age, and the only channel of the promised seed, counting that God was able to raise him up from the dead. No doubt the multitude wondered and scoffed. They thought the woman mad, and that she and her children must starve, or live on charity. They probably spoke and looked scornfully at her. There was One, however, who "sat over against the treasury and beheld," who formed a very different opinion of this act. In his view, it was one of the best, and wisest, and most glorious that ever was done under the sun. He called his disciples to behold, and learn a lesson which they should teach to the Church in all ages. He immortalized that poor widow. Yea, the Holy Ghost recorded her deed among the bright examples of faith that must give light and law to the redeemed through all time.

3. The poor widow's gift was a *sacrifice*. It cost her self-denial. It probably subjected her to personal inconvenience. At least, she incurred the risk of personal inconvenience. It was on that account a decisive test of her attachment to the cause which she sought to promote, and this was an import-

ant element of value in the estimation of Christ. This principle was always recognized under the old dispensation. David said to Ornan, "I will not take that which is thine for the Lord, nor offer burnt offerings without cost." Special promises are made in the Gospel to those who make great sacrifices for the Redeemer's sake. Those who forsake father, mother, brothers, sisters, houses, and lands for Christ's sake, are promised a hundred-fold in this life, and in the world to come life eternal. Men must consent to lose their lives, even, to save them. The apostles "forsook all" to follow Christ, and had peculiar blessings promised them in consequence.

Such proofs of genuine devotion to the Savior and his cause have great value, not only as evidences of sincerity and love, but from their salutary effect on those who offer them. Self-denial and cross-bearing are expressly made conditions of discipleship; and there are certain spiritual ends which, in the economy of the Gospel, can only be obtained by a discipline specially adapted to produce them. There are evil spirits, we know, which go out only by fasting as well as prayer. The great temperance reformation affords a beautiful and glorious illustration of this principle. We had all concluded that it was impossible, or nearly so, for a confirmed drunkard to become a Christian. Not one in a thousand who began a religious career persevered in it, and, in the spirit of unbelief, the Church had well-nigh concluded that it was better to avoid the scandal of so much grievous backsliding by leaving these unfortunate and guilty people to hasten on to infamy and to hell; but now that we have learned to prescribe fasting as well as prayer—to preach total abstinence as well as free grace—this sort of demons is becoming as manageable as any other, and our churches are rejoicing over a full harvest from a field which formerly yielded no increase. Covetousness and the love of the world is another moral disease for which a special discipline is prescribed. The young man in

the Gospel was covetous, and Christ prescribed, as an indispensable condition, that he should give away all his wealth to the poor, if he would become a disciple. The case of Zaccheus seems not to have been so malignant, and his offer to sacrifice "half his goods" was deemed sufficient. The love of money is in all ages, and most of all in a commercial age, the root of all evil, and giving on right motives is the appointed antidote. He who loves Christ more than he does his money, by consecrating, sanctifies it. He heals a bitter fountain, so that sweet waters flow out. He lays up treasure in heaven. Every such act of self-denial, done in faith, weakens and counterworks the most subtle and the most dangerous foe to our religion. Every gift made for the love of Christ and his cause transmutes a deadly, lurking poison into heavenly manna. It undermines and baffles the devil in his own strong-hold. Now the poor widow with her two mites may have needed this precise discipline as much as did the rich man with his purple, and fine linen, and sumptuous fare. The man with an income of two hundred dollars may be as covetous and as worldly as the rich man with an income of as many thousand. If so, he as much needs the antidote. If it be much or little that we love more than we love Christ, the sin is the same, and there is the same necessity to overthrow the idol, if we would not backslide and be damned. The prudent Pharisees would probably have expected Christ to chide the poor widow for her improvidence; but he who preached the Gospel to the poor knew how to prescribe his own remedies, and so ordained that we should "give alms of such things as we have"—that we should even "work with our hands, that we may have to give to him that hath need." Working-societies for charitable objects possess, in this respect, peculiar excellence, especially for persons of leisure, who do not feel small pecuniary sacrifices.

4. The poor widow's gift was strictly *voluntary*, which gave it value in God's sight: "He loveth a cheerful giver."

"As every man purposeth in his own heart, so let him give," is the rule. In her case there was no constraint from God or man. She was so poor that nobody would have blamed her for not giving, while her gift was so small that even she herself could not hope to do much good by it. She was free, therefore, from all human motives to give, and this made the religious motive more apparent and striking. A less pious spirit would have found a reason for not giving in the insignificance of the offering; but those two mites represented, in Christ's view, and honored also, a great principle. None could have a better apology for giving nothing, and therefore none could have a better opportunity to give cheerfully and freely. Now this voluntary principle was that on which the cause and kingdom of Christ were to be built up—to which it owes all its supplies—on which it depends for all future progress. He was likely to honor such a manifestation of such a principle. He still honors it, and we find that the little given by the poor and pious on that principle literally goes farther than other funds. I must think the history of our own Church an illustration at large of this truth. That of the Moravians is a yet more striking illustration on a smaller scale.

5. The widow's gift was of inestimable value as *an example*. It has probably brought more money into the Lord's treasury than any other instance of liberality on record. The rich from age to age have said, if this poor woman so pleased the Savior by giving of her penury, how much more does he require us to give of our abundance? The poor have said, if the King of all the earth so rejoiced over two mites given on proper motives, then the poorest of us may honor our Savior no less than the great and mighty of the earth. Verily, it is required of us according to what we have, and not according to what we have not. We are required to give as God hath prospered us. This deed of the poor widow, and the story of her two mites, has the same honor that Mary

had, who poured on the Savior's head a box of very precious ointment. It hath been told, and shall be told of her wherever the Gospel is preached.

The discussion of this subject suggests some rules for giving.

1. All who can, should give—the poor what they can, the rich what they can. God is equally pleased and equally honored by both. Both, too, equally need the moral influence of giving, and may be profited by it alike.

2. While all are left free to judge of their own ability, all are expected to give up to their means. The self-denial and the sacrifice are main elements of value in the Savior's estimate, and these begin when we press a little on personal convenience. The poor reach this limit, and obtain the benefit and the blessing sooner; the rich, by increasing their gifts in proportion, not as their neighbor's set them an example, but as God has prospered them. The greater the sacrifice for Christ's sake, the greater the blessing.

3. If Christ is honored and pleased by our pious gifts—if they are also disciplinary, and parts of a system of means for our religious improvement, then we ought, as Christians, to rejoice at frequent opportunities of honoring our Redeemer, and profiting our own souls. It is as unreasonable and as wicked to complain and be displeased at the frequent recurrence of such calls, as it would be to be angry that we are so often called to the holy sacrament, or to pray and sing praises, and listen to the preached Word.

XV.

CHRIST CRUCIFIED.

For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.—1 Cor., i., 22-25.

Jews and Greeks, among whom the early ministry of the apostles and their successors was mostly exercised, constituted originally, as they may now be taken to represent, the two great classes who reject, or, receiving, corrupt and pervert the Gospel. And these classes were not, and are not formed chiefly by national customs, and peculiarities, and differences of education. They grow out of the tendencies of our nature, as modified and misdirected by the fall and its consequences. Men, not as Jews, or Greeks, or barbarians, but as men, and fallen men, incline to a gross or material theology, and are instinctively averse to a spiritual religion. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."* This passage of Scripture describes the stronger and the more general tendency, and by far the larger class of persons.

I. All the forms of idolatry, ancient and modern, fall under this comprehensive category of the material and the gross, and each of them proves and illustrates the position here assumed. Their gods of gold, and silver, and wood, and stone—the deification of the planets and the elements—of animals, or abstract principles, with all their religious rites

* 1 Cor., ii., 14.

and ceremonies, gorgeous, fantastic, or bloody, were only so many expressions of this inborn tendency to go astray from the true God.

The imposing apparatus of ceremonial rites and spectacles, adopted by divine wisdom as the best means of making the eternal verities of religion impressive and effective under the Jewish dispensation, proved insufficient to satisfy the enormous demand for the sensible and the gross by that partially-civilized and stiff-necked people. For nearly a thousand years after the Exodus from Egypt, their history is largely composed of the story of the idolatries and abominations in which the ruling principle of man's religious nature so uniformly seeks and finds indulgence. This strong tendency to idolatry found at length an effectual antidote in the terrible chastisements of the Almighty, and especially in the dispersion and ruin of the nation by the Babylonish captivity. The principle, however, remained in full force, and it reappeared in the time of our Savior, in the guise of a perverse and most absurd devotion to the forms of the Mosaic system, and the traditions with which it had become obscured, while the true and spiritual import of the dispensation was quite lost sight of. The dogmas and ritual of the system were the chief obstacles to the right understanding and practice of the doctrines and moralities they were designed to inculcate. They clung to the type—to the shadow, and rejected the antitype and the substance. It was in this spirit of obstinate and blind devotion to the institutions of the Old Testament, which they had made something worse than a nullity by their debasing interpretations, that the Jews met the overtures of the Gospel as preached by Christ, and afterward by his disciples. The evidence of miracles, by which the divine authority of the new dispensation was attested, was a special arrangement to meet their religious views and prejudices, and a passport to their confidence. True, however, to their national besetment, and to the besetment of

our fallen nature—ever the same in principle, though greatly various in manifestation—they were disposed to receive the proof instead of the thing proved. They answered exhortations to repentance and faith by a demand for miracles. They refused to admit the kingdom of heaven into their hearts, but were clamorous for demonstrations to the senses. When the Jews demanded a sign from our Savior, and met the preaching of the apostle with the same requirement, it was not for the purpose of obtaining clearer proof of the truth of the Gospel, to help their unbelief, for the Savior had performed a multitude of miracles in their sight; and Paul, in this very epistle to the Corinthians, refers familiarly and repeatedly to the miracles which he had performed among them, so that there was no farther occasion for them as media of proof. But the Jews required them as an end. This was to be the sum and substance of the new religion. They would not admit its claims as a moral and spiritual dispensation. Christ's kingdom was to be earthly—its blessings and privileges were to be sensible, present, manifest, material. The very essence of it was to be in exhibition and form—gross, earthly, and manifest—not spiritual and invisible. This false view, this fatal misapprehension of the character and design of the Gospel, was and is the grand obstacle to the salvation of the seed of Abraham. The vail is yet upon their hearts. They still require a sign, and look for a Messiah adapted to their prejudices and to their grosser nature. They hope for restoration to the Holy Land. Thither they make pilgrimages. They linger about Zion. They weep and gaze on the ruins of the temple.

The Gospel, taking advantage of the progress made under the Jewish system, and of the favorable state of the world, while it retains the substance and the morals of the old covenant and fulfills the law, completely rejects its ritual. It is eminently a spiritual system. It enjoins only two simple rites, Baptism and the Lord's Supper; and, while laying all

stress upon their import, scrupulously avoids all particularity as to their forms and ceremonials. A proof of which is the endless controversies on this subject; a great evil, but less, probably, than would have arisen from giving sanction to any particular form. It was probably the design to guard against the universal tendency to rest in signs and outward observances. The Church, however, has obeyed the tendency of humanity, by multiplying and magnifying forms; as witness, for example, processions, robes, incense, relics, pictures, statues, transubstantiation, in which a mere memorial is deified. And the substance has been lost in proportion as the shadow has been honored. Outward forms and observances have proved thus far, and probably are in their nature, antagonists of spirituality.

Every thing, whether in ceremonies, or modes, or dogmas, or traditions, which withdraws the sinner's attention from Christ crucified, or gives consequence to aught but faith and holiness, is greatly liable to produce a measure of the same injury. Make a form, or a dogma, or any peculiarity *essential* to Christianity, and it becomes a hobby or an idol. In so far, it is likely to usurp the place of Christ. The more insignificant or even ridiculous the claim, the more pernicious the influence. For, by making it essential to salvation, it becomes sacred—an idol. It has the work of Christ to do, and must be invested with divine attributes for the purpose. The mind can not rest without it. The Egyptians worshiped beasts and reptiles, and therefore built the grandest temples on earth.

We are constantly liable to danger from laying too much stress even on sound opinions and proper forms. Every branch of the Church tends to honor its *peculiarities* too highly. Wesleyan Methodists have really no essential and vital peculiarities, and ought to desire none. Better lose by the proselyting efforts of our neighbors than gain by a hobby of our own. Faith, love, and holiness are the only essentials.

The Gospel—Christ crucified—was a stumbling-block to the Jews, as it is to all judaizers who require a sign instead of a Savior. His kingdom is not of this world, but in the hearts of the pious. He has fulfilled and abolished the law of ceremonies. He has made one sufficient sacrifice, and become the only mediator and the sole priest. He calls every sinner into communication with himself without mortal intervention, and he sanctifies and saves all who believe and come, without reference to names, forms, or hierarchies.

II. The tendency to the gross and the carnal is always that of the multitude—of the intellectual and the learned little less than of the ignorant. A religion of forms is, however, an absurdity which always revolts a large class of thinking men. These "seek after wisdom," commonly reject revelation, and rely upon man's natural resources. The Greeks were willing to admit light from all quarters, but had no conception of any agency higher than their own philosophy. Their systems went no farther than to make provision for time, and felt not the want of any provision for eternity. It was not religion, but ethics that they sought. Not rising to that which was above their philosophy, they rejected what was inconsistent with it.

Philosophers and skeptics do so now. Their own systems are the standard. If the Gospel diverges from this, it is false, of course. A new discovery, or rash hypothesis, or impudent pretension, is exalted above revelation, and proves its fallacy.

One man stands upon the crater of Vesuvius, and, as he looks upon the strata of fragmentary and stony matter beneath the surface, declares that the Mosaic account of the creation is contradicted by their evidence. Another once stood beside me; he was a man of learning and shrewdness, and withal of much pretension. Pointing to an inscription on a tomb, in a language but very imperfectly understood even by the learned, he said, "There is the tomb of the Pharaoh who, according to the account of Moses, was drown-

ed in the Red Sea. And you are a believer in the writings of this Moses. Now how can you explain this?"

Philosophy was very early combined with the Gospel, and corrupted it. It is now, and is made supreme by Socinians and others. As they are to take great liberty with the Gospel, they consistently deny that it is inspired, or that Christ is divine. They then deny human depravity, very properly too, as they have taken away the power of the remedy and the skill of the physician. It is thus left a mere human system—wisdom—philosophy, which they explain, modify, remodel, transform, to suit the changing times. In fact, their system is only human. They look only to worldly, physical, intellectual results, and substantially leave the future, the soul, eternity, to take care of themselves. They leave out religion, in fact. They see man, society, the world, in disorder, but think only of remodeling the fabric. More skill, more wisdom, better appliances, will set all right. The temple lies in ruins around them, and they attempt to rebuild it with the old materials, instead of calling upon the great Architect to rear the lofty pile, and restore it to its original proportions. The magnificent idea of God's taking a poor fallen worm, and transforming it, and making of this being a dweller in eternity, fitted to be a companion of angels, and to hold communion with God, they do not receive.

Another form of "wisdom" comes in the guise of the transcendental philosophy, which just now threatens great danger. This receives and lauds the Gospel, but only admits it to a niche in the great temple of philosophy. It is one, but only one, subordinate idea or principle. These men indulge in large views, and are dazzled by the comprehensiveness of their theory. Their religion is only civilization. The Gospel is now the great agent of human progress. Eastern despotisms developed government; Moses, religion; Greece, art; Rome, law; the Middle Ages, human rights; and now the Gospel is working for humanity. They can not deny the

wonder-working power of Christianity in erecting asylums for the destitute and afflicted, in diffusing knowledge, in pouring light upon the earth, and civilizing the nations; and they are very well pleased that it should perform its part while they are perfecting their apparatus, and before they bring it into operation. Magnificent nonsense all this, without one element of religion—one look toward God and eternity; not worth noticing, only that it is stealing into our theology, speaks through the religious press, and really infects and bewilders the minds of many pious ministers.

To all the forms of man's "wisdom," put in substitution for religion, the Gospel is "foolishness," is absurd, misses the whole matter, for it looks to eternity. Its business is to purify sinful souls, and send them to heaven. "After that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe."

III. Yet is the Gospel the power and wisdom of God to Jews and Greeks. And it is evidently so, first, from its comprehensiveness, being adapted to all; secondly, from its certainty and authority—substituting, as it does, divine revelation for uncertain speculation; thirdly, from its good effects upon society and individuals; and, fourthly, from its truly religious character, looking to God and eternity. These proofs are obvious to all, and bespeak a system from the Creator.

But the reference is to evidence addressed specially to the "called"—to demonstration made to and in the truly pious. To them the Gospel is "the power and wisdom of God." "The secret of the Lord is with them who fear him." "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God."

The "preaching of Christ crucified" demonstrates the divinity of the Gospel by its felt influences upon those who believe. It is, in fact, the great instrument of leading men to piety.

1. It is most awakening. Insensibility is the first evil to be dealt with. The mass of unconverted men are in a torpor—a lethargy. They are graphically described as being "dead in trespasses and sins," and they need an awakening power, and such a power is the preaching of Christ crucified. Suppose a messenger from heaven were to come down, and simply tell the story of the cross—that Christ came to die to save men—that he died, rose again, ascended to heaven, and prays for them there; ought not this announcement to produce a restlessness, an anxiety, an earnest inquiry what they were to do with reference to this mysterious declaration? What tale so startling, so calculated to rouse?

2. The preaching of Christ crucified is calculated to produce the deepest convictions of the evil and danger of sin, and of the badness of our natural state. If God gave his *Son* to atone for sin, sin must be a tremendous evil, beyond minor remedies, grievous in God's sight, ruinous to man. He might, in a much more summary way, have wiped out this stain on the fair face of creation, by sweeping us all into hell, or annihilating us; "but God *so* loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The idea of punishment inflicted on the guilty, on finite men, is not as impressive as this wrath resting on the innocent—the divine. The view is irresistible—overwhelming. Let in the idea, and it must conquer the soul.

3. "Preaching Christ crucified" excites to hope—courage—faith. If God has given his Son to die for sinners, he means to counterwork sin. He is greatly set on saving the sinner. He will not withhold minor gifts. Christ was, indeed, anxious to save the lost. This dying for us shows his character and compassion. And then this rising again—this triumph over the last enemy, shows his power. He is able—he is willing to save. No demonstration is so clear. The penitent could not imagine an array of proofs more conclusive.

Let him try if he can wish more. The evidence is strictly irresistible. Let the penitent look it in the face, and believe it, and his fears fly away. He feels the power of God in the doctrine of Christ dying on the cross—Christ our intercessor in heaven. Let the repenting sinner fix his eye on the Lamb slain. Get him to lift it up above himself and his sins, and then there is no need of more preaching. He has the whole body of divinity before him. He sees "the way, the truth, and the life" at a glance. He sees Christ as he is, and will soon be like him. The transforming influence is moving upon his soul. His fear is gone. His doubts are fled. Gratitude springs, and must spring, even from a heart of adamant. A strong tide of love rolls in, and inundates his soul.

This is the doctrine by eminence—"Christ crucified." It breaks and wins hearts. It is God's power and wisdom—his way of saving sinners. It is so simple that children may understand it—so powerful that none but devils can resist it.

How cold, inappropriate, and heartless is the religion of types, and signs, and forms, in such a presence! How would the penitent soul, struggling into life in the full light of the Savior's reconciled, beaming countenance, receive the proffered intervention of a formal, traditionary religion? How listen to arguments about baptismal regeneration and sacramental efficacies? about episcopal ordination and the true succession? "Don't mock me. Don't give me a stone. Don't lead me to empty cisterns." I hunger. I thirst. Don't attempt to satisfy the wants of my spiritual nature with forms and traditions—"with husks which the swine do eat." Don't talk to me of popes and prelates—of the keys or the true succession. Give me the bread of life. Lift up a full cup of living waters to my parched lips, that I may thirst no more. Do not step in between me and my crucified Savior. I see him, and it sufficeth. "Man of sorrows, acquainted with grief," thou shalt be my healer. "Thou wast slain for my transgression and art exalted evermore a Prince and a Savior!"

4. The doctrine of Christ crucified, which is so manifestly the power and the wisdom of God in the sinner's conversion, is no less divinely adapted to all the exigencies of his Christian experience. Christ crucified for our sins—risen from the dead—our living intercessor in God's presence—himself—his offices of intervention—clothed and instinct with divinity. It is enough! The disciple is fitted for every work or trial; to struggle for holiness—to bear the cross—to endure shame or persecution—to smile at the king of terrors.

5. The Gospel is the power and wisdom of God, also, in its inworking ministries. The Holy Spirit is all divine in its agencies, and demonstrates itself to be so to the subject of its operations. The Gospel appeals not only to our moral obligation to serve and love God, but to the gracious spiritual lodgment within—always its precursor and accompaniment. The soul is awfully conscious of this divine movement within, and feels it to be the power and wisdom of God.

So the evidence of justification and acceptance—the witness of God's Spirit—is divine, and so felt to be. So also are the various manifestations of the Spirit as Comforter, Sanctifier, Helper, demonstration of God's power and wisdom. "I will send another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of truth: he shall teach you all things."

Of the same character are the Christian's love, faith, hope—his oneness of interest with Christ—his habit of leaning on Him, all of which gradually become well defined and appreciable to the Christian, as much so as any other feelings or pursuits.

This accumulation of interior, experimental evidence is, after all, that on which the Gospel rests. This is God's intention. Millions know the truth from experience and consciousness. They are God's witnesses. They testify for Christ by words—by actions—by unseen, but felt influences. Men believe them; they can not avoid it. The thunder of this test-

imony to the truth swells upon their ears. A power goes out from this mighty cloud of witnesses, which pierces the "joints of their armor," and enters into their hearts. If these Christians know any thing on earth, they know that they have communion with their Savior; that in trouble and sorrow they find God a very present help. These facts in the inner life of the soul are as much realities to them as any of the objects by which they are surrounded. They have a secret history, of whose events they can take full cognizance, and in the truth of which they can not be mistaken. Their hands may be employed in secular pursuits, they may buy, and sell, and plow, and plant; but there is an interior life, with whose joys and sorrows a stranger may not intermeddle. They are eye, ear-conscious witnesses, not liable to be deceived, with no motive to deceive; and man's nature must hear them. Thus the general mind—the general heart of society, is rife and instinct with the awful conviction, produced by no argument, but flowing out upon them, as it were spontaneously, from the Spirit of God in each individual Christian, and from the spirit of the Church, that the Gospel is the power and the wisdom of God.

IV. There is one part of my subject that I can not pass over, and that is the importance of preaching. It is often depreciated—as less important than prayers or the sacraments —as man's work. Last Sunday I heard an eminent divine speak of it as of secondary importance, and exalt above it the prayers of the Church. It affected me to hear preaching undervalued—preaching, the grand ordinance which God has instituted to save men's souls, and to build them up in their most holy faith. Christ *preached* in the cities of Judea. The apostles were *preachers* of the Gospel. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of good things, that publish peace." Paul says it is the power of God. God saves "by the foolishness of preaching." He boasts that in one city he baptized but two adults, "for

Christ," says he, "sent me, not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel." We must magnify preaching. It is God's power in earthen vessels, more honored than all other instruments —more than sacraments and prayers. "The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."

Success in preaching Christ crucified is the proof of our call—of our apostleship—of the divine validity of our ministry. It is the great practical argument against all who deny it or call it in question. If we save souls, we are true successors of Christ and the apostles.

This is the way to meet the pretensions of our adversaries. Preach on. In the midst of a million converts, we can not be confounded. It is well to meet the argument logically—to shed light on its flaws and assumptions. It is better still to cut the Gordian knot by the sword of the Spirit. Strike the glittering chain in the might of faith; it will prove a chain of sand. The seals of our apostleship will be demonstration enough to men, and stars in the crown of our final exaltation and reward.

And now, brethren, I have explained the text according to my own most deliberate and prayerful view of its import, and I have endeavored to make such application of its teachings as appeared most adapted to the edification and encouragement of all who sincerely ask, "What must I do to be saved?" The occasion calls, perhaps, for something more, and I am by no means disposed to shut myself out of the liberties conceded to the preacher at such seasons, of diverging from the path marked out by conventional rules, for the purpose of meeting, more properly than can be done in our Sabbath exercises, the exigencies of pending questions and controversies, and of looking fully in the face any aspect of the changeful times. Still, I think my general subject as good as any I could have chosen for this occasion. I see not how a house of prayer

can more appropriately be dedicated to Christ than by preaching Christ in it. I am honored highly in having been the first to stand here in this temple of the living God, and point the first assemblage of sinners that ever congregated within its walls to "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." "To Him who hath loved us, and died for us," be this convenient, tasteful structure, whose foundations and top-stone were laid in his blessed name, consecrated for evermore. Be that adorable name written above its portals, to warn the approaching worshiper what divinity presides within. Let it be the burden of the preacher's utterance—let it be sung in every song of praise. Let it be invoked and adored in every prayer. Let it be echoed from Sabbath to Sabbath, and from time to time, in this pulpit, and around the altar, and along the aisles, and through the galleries, to the preacher a strong-hold of hope and a tower of strength—penitence to the sinner, peace to the mourner, and grace to the believer. May Jesus take in his arms and bless the precious lambs who may attend on the Sabbath-school, and be one in the midst of the little groups, who, because "they fear the Lord," shall speak often one to another in the apartments below us; and may the blessings of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost be here, filling this goodly house and the hearts of all the people now and evermore.

But I must not forget that such an event as the opening of a new house of worship has other aspects than such as are properly and exclusively religious. It is an economic event, on which thoughtful, good citizens and the fathers of the town look with interest and satisfaction. They recognize the influence of public worship and religious instruction on public morals and good order, and sympathize with such undertakings as being nearly connected with the general weal. And so, doubtless, they are most intimately; and these zealous men, who have made efforts and sacrifices to build this church, thinking little, if at all, of any but its religious uses,

have really acted a part of high patriotism, and they really deserve better of the public than if they had laid out as much money upon a prison or a house of correction. I venture to predict of this new temple of God, that it will prove a powerful auxiliary to the city government in the maintenance of law and order. It will tend to the diminution of vice, and crime, and pauperism. It will act as a direct antagonist to grog-shops, and theatres, and houses of sin and shame. All this and much more will be done without being directly aimed at, or having been, perhaps, so much as thought of by the promoters of this enterprise. I will mention some of the means relied on for the production of such results. Of the edifice I need not speak, for you all see it is neat, commodious, and of good capacity, and that is all. It has no great architectural pretensions—it is neither Grecian nor Gothic in its style—has no groined arches or stained windows. So of the religious services that will from time to time be had here. There will certainly be an utter want of all pomp and circumstance. I do not speak of these things either to blame or commend—I express no opinion; but my purpose only demands that I should say, here will be nothing to move the imagination—no painting or statuary—no subduing organ, and no sumptuous robes. The preacher will commonly be a plain man, owing little to deep learning or eloquence. There will be extempore prayer and plain singing, and there will be a Sabbath-school and class-meetings in the basement. Beyond this brief enumeration, I know not what I need to add in order to give a full view of the means and appliances belonging usually to a city congregation of Methodists. I quite agree with all who think there is nothing in all this that looks like redeeming the promise I have ventured to make, to help the night-watch in keeping order, and to relieve the police courts of a portion of their labors. I have purposely made a show of the paucity and the poverty of our means, in order that you may perceive

more clearly the true ground of our reliance. Our expectation is from God and the power of his truth. The minister, whatever he may fail to do, will not fail, if a true Methodist, to preach Christ crucified. The simple prayers will, we trust, be mighty through faith. We expect that, in answer to them, God will send down the Holy Ghost and convert the people, and they will go away with their faces turned toward heaven, instinct with the new principle of action, that God will judge them for the deeds done in the body. Henceforth they walk with a conscience—more vigilant than your night patrol—giving forth oracles of law and righteousness in tones more distinct and startling than the alarms of your fire-bells. Its conservative influence will soon be felt on the exchange, in the shop, at the polls, around the fireside.

I think it right to improve my subject by another practical application of its doctrine. It is, perhaps, but reasonable to expect, that men who build a new church and organize a new congregation in this day of light and progress, should avail themselves of the fullest benefits of experience, and of the advancement of Christian knowledge. For the same reason that we should not expect a new church with a sharp roof, and a high pulpit, and two or three tiers of galleries, we might expect some care to be used in securing the best internal organization for harmony and efficiency, and for purity of doctrine and discipline. The experience of this age is abundant in suggestions on these and other points of great moment; and it is natural, on such an occasion, to inquire whether the movers in this new enterprise have profited by the new lights that shine so thickly and clearly upon this generation. I have not learned that they have given any heed to these interests, and I rather presume that they have not, but have been content to proceed pretty much on the old plan. I believe that the great majority of Methodists give themselves but little trouble about such matters. Hav-

ing entered the Church to serve God and save their souls, they have been mostly busy with those pursuits; and having felt no serious inconveniences in fact, have not thought worth while to look for them in theory. Another large class have studied the system, as well as tried it, and they like it well in both aspects, and that after being very faithfully admonished from many quarters that it contains too little or too much of the democratic element—that it gives too little or too great scope to clerical authority. I think there is a growing feeling among us, that that can not, upon the whole, be a very bad system of faith or action which saves so many souls and does so much good; and that, with so many pressing demands on our attention, we may, for the present, adjourn the consideration of evils which many can see, but nobody feel. We are beginning to honor our plan, because God honors it. We do not claim that it conforms exactly to any Scripture model, but do believe it has been fashioned by the hand of Providence, which is just as much as we are able to believe of any other scheme of Church government. Upon the whole, though there may still be some diversity of sentiment on minor points, I think there was never more general harmony on questions of this sort. We can not say so much, but I think we can nearly as much, with regard to several questions thrown up by the action of the voluntary associations of the day; each, it has been thought by some, should be brought upon ecclesiastical grounds, and so made a Church question. Many individual churches, it is well known, have been remodeled in this way, and made to embrace in their creed or discipline the new and special views of their members on matters not formerly thought to come within the proper scope of Church authority. The builders of this edifice have made no provision for these cases, choosing to travel on in the old paths; and so, as a body, our large denomination is likely to decide this question. We have not thought it wise to introduce new terms of membership, or to identify the Church with objects

good in themselves, it may be, or evil, but yet belonging to men as citizens rather than as members of an ecclesiastical organization. The Gospel proposes the cure of all evils, but can not take counsel or law from the rashness, or policy, or impatience of the world. It will work in its own way, and go on offering Christ crucified as its only remedy, and the Spirit as its only agent. Good men may be impatient of delays, and may push on material changes in advance of moral preparation; but they will learn, from sad reactions, how little is gained by outrunning God, and how feeble a champion the Church is, when she wields carnal weapons, or spiritual for secular ends.

I will not conclude without making a brief application of my subject to the religious agitations of the times, in which all denominations, and none more than ours, have a vital and most urgent interest. I will confine myself, as far as practicable, to what I esteem the great principle involved in these questions, as it becomes one not perfectly familiar with particular facts, as he can not be who dwells even a little way from the theatres of controversy. I would refer less to manifestations than to tendencies, which I think nobody can be mistaken in regarding as strong toward great and manifold departures from what have usually been regarded among us as the economy and spirit of the Gospel. I am struck with the fact that these agitations are wholly confined to denominations styled evangelical, and that all under that category have felt them, while sects which have kept to a lower type of theology were never more quiet. We must not look at the present moment, but to the current, for true and adequate views on this subject; and the history of even a few years will teach us that disasters, sufficiently various in their developments, have been very general in their extent, if not traceable to some common source. The tendency of which I speak is manifested in many ways. It might be difficult to determine whether men are just now more

clamorous and dogmatical in their advocacy of the new or the old—of neology or tradition—of the fanatics or the fathers. And though public attention is just now mostly engrossed with a single manifestation of what, I fear, we must regard as a disease of the times, ought we to forget that its name is legion? Recent as we are in our origin, our own Church presents, in our measure and type, all or nearly all the phenomena of the moral disease that rages around us. We have inquisitive men who are looking forward, and others who look back in quest of change and light. Since our cornfields were planted for the ripened or just-garnered harvest, we have had a new Church organization, embodying all improvements up to the present hour, and so making manifest the form and pressure of true Wesleyanism, as distinguished from the old, the corrupted, and the effete. We have long had, both in England and here, a Primitive Methodism, relying chiefly upon a stricter conformity with the original model. So it is, that while not a few ingenious men are engaged in removing the rubbish of the past, others of opposite tastes are mining in our young antiquity, faithfully and joyfully announcing whatever in the history of our golden age—which they commonly place about the close of the war of the Revolution—may serve to show how many things which they do not approve got into our system, and others, which they like better, were left out. The very numerous Presbyterian family, constituting certainly one of the purest and best branches of Christ's Church, are hardly emerging from protracted contests that involve the great principles in such general debate. We have heard all the changes rung upon the old and the new—loud calls onward to greater changes, and backward to Saybrook or Geneva. Ingenious, learned champions have taken the field. New doctrinal propositions have been elaborated. Bridges have been thrown over the chasms which time has exposed or made in the old religious metaphysics, and the web of argumentation or of sophistry

has been spun fine as gossamer, and as transparent. Just now another denomination, venerable for its antiquity, sound in its creed, and rich in its calendar of confessors and martyrs, feels most the shock of the strife. What is most interesting in all this is to learn, if we can, the basis of general controversy and threatened revolution. Why this rushing on to the new—this eager looking back to the old?

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XVI.

ON DOING GOD'S WILL.

If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.—JOHN, vii., 17.

THE language of the text does not convey precisely the idea of the Savior, and there is, perhaps, no passage in the New Testament, not incorrectly translated, which gives so feebly the import of the original. The "will do" of the text does not mean future action, but voluntary and earnest action, and the "shall know" might, with more propriety, be rendered shall ascertain. Thus understood, and herein nearly all commentators concur, our text teaches that, in its highest and best sense, *religion is an experimental science, and that the knowledge of it, so attained, is satisfactory and certain.*

The Gospel, without abating any thing from its demands to be received as a divine revelation of God's only way of saving sinners, claims the benefit of a simple and practical test, and puts its disciples upon the true, philosophic method for ascertaining its truth and power. For this purpose, and to this extent, it descends into the common arena of human investigations, and calls upon us to proceed in the settlement of its pretensions upon the same principles which, at a much

later period, Bacon adopted as the only proper and safe guide in scientific inquiries, and to which seekers of truth in every department, physical, intellectual, and moral, now profess their adhesion and their homage.

I carefully and distinctly announce that the experimental is not the only method of proof which belongs to the Gospel, nor is it adapted to all, but only to a special class of its revelations. The divine mission and character of the adorable Savior were demonstrated by miracles. Many of the facts of the evangelical records rest upon historical testimony, while the divine authority of the holy Scriptures may, perhaps, be most satisfactorily established by internal and intrinsic evidence. It is chiefly, perhaps exclusively, the morals and the inward experience of our religion which appeal to this practical test as their appropriate means of demonstration.

The progress of Christianity, and the entire history of the Church, may well be considered in the light of a great experiment, testing the character and tendencies of the system. The Gospel was at first received with distrust, and even hostility. This was natural, for it did violence to the religion, laws, customs, literature, and prejudices of men; was exclusive in its claims; threatened universal change, and so excited the fears and enmity of rulers and people, of good and bad men. These were its avowed tendencies—it was "a sword," not "peace." It struggled against opposition, amid storms of persecution, into a manifestation of its true genius. Its revolutions were blessings. It elevated the debased—reformed the vicious—taught the ignorant—comforted the mourner—restrained the tyrant—liberated the bondman—introduced reforms into the public administration, and purity and harmony into the domestic circle. The result of the great experiment was, that it triumphed over its foes, and won a place in the world's confidence, and was embraced and loved as the best of the gifts which God has bestowed upon the race.

A similar illustration has been uniformly afforded by the history of the various evangelical sects which now constitute the general Christian Church. Universally the introduction of new usages—the reform of old abuses—the revival of neglected doctrines—new modes, names, or forms, awaken the apprehensions of the cautious, and provoke the contempt and opposition of the masses. Universally, too, these hostile manifestations have been found to subside in proportion as the rising sect gives demonstration of its real Christian character and objects. The history of the great revival, under the labors of Whitefield and Wesley, affords a memorable example; nor ought we to doubt that the opposition, and even persecutions, which those good and great men every where encountered, proceeded often, perhaps generally, from honest fears or misapprehensions. Their novel and wonderful career seemed to threaten old establishments, opinions, and usages with an utter overthrow. No wonder that their great, fundamental, and eternally iterated doctrine of "justification by faith alone," was denounced, by a formal and *legal* Church, as likely to discourage good works, and bring in an inundation of vice and immorality. No wonder that strong Antinomians saw, in their stern demand for obedience and holy living as indispensable conditions of salvation, the advent of all hypocrisy and Pharisaism. It was natural for a learned and stately hierarchy to look with horror upon lay-preaching —on the admission to the ministerial office of those who had never learned Greek or Hebrew. We accordingly find them every where opposed as dangerous, and denounced as heretical. All the churches were closed against them, and all pulpits and presses vocal with warnings and anathemas They, however, prosecuted their mission as those who must give account to God—as manifest in his sight, and in the consciences of the spiritually enlightened. The effects of their ministry became apparent in the reformation and civilization of the lower orders. The blessed fruits of the Gospel

were manifested in the holy lives and happy deaths of their converts. Prejudice itself was compelled to admit that these were legitimate manifestations of a true Christianity; and bigotry grew ashamed of denouncing the new sect, when it had become to all the world as "a city set on a hill," a "light shining in a dark place." And it has resulted from this great experiment in England as well as in this country, that the Christian character and evangelical spirit of the new sect are acknowledged. By common consent, it has taken its place quietly in the great family of Churches, claiming to be no better, and not often asserted to be worse, than the average Christianity of the land. If, now and then, an eccentric or an over-zealous man feels constrained to assail our creed, or usages, or ministry, or modes of administration, it is usually accompanied with a concession of all we ought to care for—an admission of our general sincerity and substantial piety. There is scarcely a neighborhood or a parish in all the land where this great experiment has not been exhibited on a larger or smaller scale. There have been the new doctrines, and usages, and extravagances, it may be—the hostility, the denunciation, and the polemic fray, and then the subsidence of passion—the reluctant toleration—the dawning of bland charity—then the brotherly salutation, and the blessed fellowship of Christian love, of prayer, and of good works.

The same great principle finds illustration in the history of nearly every good man. Let him remove into an irreligious neighborhood, or begin to live up to the high standard of the Gospel any where. What obloquy—what contempt—what jeering! His motives, words, actions, are misunderstood, misrepresented, contemned. He pursues the tenor of his way—does right—is kind, humble, happy in God—holds forth "the word of life." In time the storm subsides; the clamor dies away, and he is let alone. By-and-by the more bold suspect he is not so bad as he seemed; only odd and

over-strict, but well-meaning. Still later, his piety is perceived—his good morals, and even manners, appreciated. In the end, he is the peace-maker of his vicinity; and when men are on their death-beds, they will have him pray with them, and leave him the guardian of their children.

Thus it is that the divine religion of Jesus has commended itself to the favor and confidence of man in a way which strikingly illustrates, as it avowedly obeys, the great philosophic principle of Bacon and his followers. The children of God, while working out their own salvation with fear and trembling, are at the same time unconsciously carrying forward a vast, sublime experiment, in the presence of the whole world—an experiment which has silently undermined the foundations of false religion and philosophy—has put to shame the persecutor and the scorner—won the confidence of the infidel, and the respect even of the profligate. Without acknowledging or perceiving the influence, all classes of men, all sects, every individual, are mightily affected by it. Sentiments, usages, modes of operation, which, even twenty years ago, were generally denounced, now that experience has shown them harmless or of salutary tendencies, are freely adopted. Other opinions and practices, which, twenty years since, were reverenced as part and parcel of Christianity, have been stamped as worthless by the same ordeal of experiment, and on that account have been rejected. As these teachings of experience are found to concur always with the word of God when fairly interpreted, though they were perhaps the first to suggest that fair interpretation, we ought probably to expect still greater advancement in knowledge and sound theology from this agency. As the Church advances in piety and zeal, she will occupy a better position for understanding more fully the genius of the Gospel and her own "high calling of God in Christ Jesus." It is within the memory of the middle-aged that the best Christians thought nothing of the duty of preaching the Gospel to the heathen.

The children of our Sabbath-schools can well remember when the temperance reformation commenced. The progress already made in these great enterprises may be said to have written new articles in our creeds—to have given us new eyes for reading God's Word. No one can imagine that Christians will ever dare to slumber again over these interests. They will henceforth be recognized parts of Christ's cause and kingdom. The progress of the great experiment will not fail to enlarge still farther the yet narrow horizon of our piety, and we shall yet read of glorious truths, privileges, and duties which we do not now suspect to be in our Bibles. By doing God's will, we shall know more and more of his doctrine. I sometimes rejoice in the confident hope that this outspreading of zeal and piety of the Church may ultimately work out a creed in which we may all agree—may throw up a common ground for the harmonious meeting of all sects—may bring into prominence and visibility the really essential doctrines and moralities of the Gospel, and sink out of our view or push away into the back-ground such as have only a minor or imaginary importance. I am sure that this is the constant tendency of the great experiment, and that the blessed consummation would be realized if we were baptized into a larger faith and charity—if we would look and learn more reverently from God's administration—if the pulpit, and the press, and the general Church would become a little more humble, and forbearing, and kind.

It would hardly be possible to appreciate too highly the general influences which I have described as flowing from examples of individual piety, and from the exhibition, on a larger scale, by the Church, of the character and tendencies of the Gospel. It has resulted from these influences, that the population of Christian lands are Christians in their faith, though not in their doings and affections. By looking on as spectators upon the great experiment of the Gospel; by seeing the beautiful examples of virtue and piety which every

where thrust themselves upon their notice, if they will but open their eyes; by breathing the common atmosphere which religion has purified, the common mind has been brought, with no effort of its own, but merely by the unsuspected and irresistible agencies here referred to, to acknowledge the truth and the divinity of the Gospel.

Thns far have the irreligious been led on by the benignant genius of Christianity. The general truths of an orthodox creed have been successfully inculcated upon them by influences which they did not invite, and which they could not elude. Other lessons of still more vital import they can learn only by voluntary efforts—by becoming themselves the experimenters. The attainment of a living faith in Christ, the forgiveness of sins through his blessed atonement, of sanctification through the Holy Spirit; these are achievements left to personal effort and agency, aided by the divine grace. They can not be wrought out by substitutes. It is only when each individual arouses himself to the high purpose of doing God's will, that he can know—fully ascertain—of these doctrines whether they be of God. Even these most spiritual, personal, and indispensable doctrines are so demonstrated by the general experience of the Church, as, in theory, to be generally admitted and believed by the unconverted. Though not subject to common observation, nor appreciable, like the more general and social tendencies of Christianity, the testimony of the multitude of obedient and believing disciples, who have made the experiment for themselves, and realized the great results in their own hearts, has won upon human belief, and gained for the most spiritual parts of Christianity the fullest credence of the unconverted. And it is impossible to reject such testimony. The witnesses are numerous, intelligent, respectable, harmonious, diverse in time, place, habits, education. They affirm of facts that belong to their consciousness. Not to speak of the witness of the Spirit—though no testimony could be more distinct or appreciable

to an intellectual moral being—can men be supposed to be mistaken as to whether they love or not? What would be thought of it should I approach a parent—a child—and express doubts about the reality of their love to a son or a mother? The Christian is no more liable to mistake as to the inward testimony of his love to God, his gratitude, his trust, his peace. One may err, but all can not, and the general verdict is and must be believed. Unconverted men believe that a great spiritual work is going on in their neighbors. They do not once doubt its reality. They trust to experience it, and believe it to be a condition of acceptance and salvation. Under the gracious influences often upon them, they feel the moral obligation of possessing the boon. They at times desire it—are ready to reach out a hand to seize it—to open the door and admit its transforming energy. Though they acknowledge the power to be of God, they yet feel impelled to a movement that they think indispensable to salvation.

So far God, as a sovereign, has brought them on. He has wrought out the demonstrations of his truth before their eyes. He has implanted all the elements of faith in their minds. Whether they will or not, they believe his word. They know they must be born of the Spirit. They know they must submit to Christ. They feel they must love God filially. Christ must be formed within them. They must live to Christ, or die forever. The glorious prize is full in view. The gates of heaven open wide. They stand upon the verge of the purifying fountain. "Come, come unto me," is the invitation that woos them onward. Oh, why is the sinner motionless—stationary? Why not go in at the open door? Why not grasp the dazzling prize? The appeal is now to the sinner's own agency. God has brought him to a barrier which he must remove with his own hand, or no more progress will be made. That barrier is within himself. One heroic effort of the *will* now, and the crisis is

passed—the barrier scaled. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine." An absolute renunciation of self—an unreserved casting of himself on Christ, to be led, governed, saved as He will, in a moment opens the door of acceptance, and brings in upon the soul all the agencies and attributes of the new birth.

Here I take my stand on the line which divides between the children of God and aliens. The difficulty is palpable, though so simple. It is one—an unyielding will. It is vincible. One step—one struggle—one great resolve, and by the grace of God the victory is won. All obstacles, all deficiencies not already removed and provided for by Christ are centered in this one of a perverse volition. The sinner is perfectly prepared for the transformation. He believes in God—in his own guilt and helplessness—in the Gospel—in Christ as the only Savior, as a sufficient, willing Savior. What is now required of him is to act on this faith, and commit his soul to these provisions. He needs no more repentance preparatory to the work, but only one great effort of self-renunciation, sin and all. Repentance? Of what? Why, this stubbornness of the will is the substance and the sum—the fundamental, central idea of all sin. To clear away this difficulty is to become a Christian; not to do it is to cling to perdition. It savors of madness to talk about repentance, and yet not to spend a thought upon this chief mystery of iniquity.

Nor can I see what prayer is likely to effect, so long as the mind is stubborn against God. Ask pardon—religion—life of Him, against whom we voluntarily stand arrayed in incurable enmity? He bids the sinner bow to Him. No, you will have the Eternal yield, and accept your terms!

Almost the same thing may be said of reformation. Till the heart's consent is had to do God's will, there is no basis for reformation. The motive is false. It is a cheat upon the soul, and an insult to Jehovah, to think of such a thing.

It is saying to the Most High, "I'll do as I please, and work on my own account. I am content to make some parade about religion, but I will not be religious. I'll whiten the sepulchre, but I will not cleanse it." Generally, it may be said that the postponement of this first step in religion for any cause is the highest possible offense, and the essence of all offenses against God. Until that previous question is disposed of, the sinner does, and can do nothing but "treasure up wrath against the day of wrath."

There is often something very painful in the exhibitions brought out by pressing this point upon the consciences of men. No man can or dare directly reject the appeal, for the question lies plainly between conscience and God; and the voice of the accuser is not in the preacher, but in the sinner's own heart. Still, he who will not submit must make some shift, for there is no such thing as looking calmly from such a position. The mind seeks subterfuge and evasion. Resolved not to obey God in this urgent call for the homage of the will, the sinner seeks a controversy about some minor question, and makes up an issue on a collateral point. When we call for the present doing of the only act which at this stage of the business he can do or God accept, he tells us, perhaps, that the Bible is a dark book to him — that he has difficulties about the doctrine of election or the atonement, that he can not credit our notions about Christian perfection, or he does not like our Church government. No wonder if these and other questions puzzle him. He has nothing to do with them now—he has but one duty, to give himself up to God with all his heart. He closes the door of knowledge if he refuses to comply with the condition on which it is offered. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine." Obedience is the condition on which all knowledge is promised. He who rejects the process, of course, fails in his object. A man doubts or cavils at the truths of science, and yet has not studied. He does not understand, forsooth, how that the sun

is larger than it seems, or how it is that the earth moves. We say, fool! you must learn arithmetic, and use the telescope.

Precisely such is the moral attitude of the impenitent. God says, do my will, which is the way to all knowledge. No, says the sinner, I call for light before I will move. Solve this mystery, explain this doctrine, reconcile these apparent contradictions. Will God teach such an one? Will he listen to such calls? No! The sinner has light enough for the first step in religion. He does not need, and will not obtain now what he may want by-and-by. He has one talent—enough for present use. He must use it if he would obtain ten when needed. It is of the essence of faith to move at God's bidding, trusting him for the result and for the future.

It is often said that faith regulates practice. It is about equally true that practice modifies faith. We learn God's truth by doing his will, and thus spontaneously grow up believers. On the other hand, we darken and pervert our own belief by disobedience and sin. Men decide against conscience, and try to doubt, and at length learn to doubt, of obligations which they mean to violate. By this process they become, to an extent, infidel. If they return to sobriety and thoughtfulness after success, or disappointment, or satiety, they revert again to Christian ground without argument, as they left it without; but they seldom are converted.

The young should remember and shun this danger. All resistance to God, and departure from virtue or truth, pervert the faith as well as morals; and, on the other hand, obedience necessarily and always leads on to faith and knowledge, for "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God."

XVII.

THE HIDDEN LEAVEN.

The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened.—MATTH., xiii., 33.

THERE is a very important sense in which the divine administration over the world and its inhabitants does not conform to the analogy here employed to shadow forth its character and its action. The government of the material universe—the laws which produce and modify the various conditions and changes of our physical state, are not subject to progress or variation, but are absolute and perfect. Nearly the same may be said of the Divine providence which is incessantly exercised over human affairs. Many deep questions have arisen, and many more may arise, as to the extent and influence of this supervision—as to the degree and kind of its interference, and the sphere and mode of its operation; but no doubt can be entertained, by either a pious or a philosophic mind, in regard to its free action and uncontrolled authority within its appropriate, allotted orbit. Here, no less divinely than over physical nature, "the Lord reigneth," though certainly under such conditions, and with such an inviolable respect for human freedom and agency, as the wisdom of the Most High is wont to prescribe to its own plans and operations.

The kingdom of heaven, that "is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened," is unlike God's reign over physical nature, or the ministries of his providence. It is capable of enlargement. It advances by growth. It proceeds from

small beginnings to universal dominion. Such is the kingdom which the adorable Redeemer seeks to establish in the world and in the human heart.

1. The doctrine of the text finds apt and instructive illustration in the first propagation and subsequent history of the Gospel. We never more clearly discern what are the real elements of power and progress in our holy religion than when we contemplate the Church in its infancy. Twelve unlettered men, the most obscure in their social position, and utterly destitute of all the usual means of extending their authority or propagating their opinions, were then the sole depositories and apostles of the religious system which aspired to no less an achievement than the subversion of all existing forms of idolatry, and the universal establishment of a new creed in religion and ethics, and of new principles and modes of worship. Verily, the leaven was "hidden." Nobody would have suspected that the little company, assembled with their persecuted Master, in an upper room at Jerusalem, were to be the chief instruments of the mightiest of revolutions Herod, who slew the innocent babes of Bethlehem, lest there might be in some one of them the undeveloped germ of great powers and high destinies, could hardly have feared a dozen peasants and fishermen, of simple, blameless habits, and the most unambitious pretensions. In this humble band, however, were hidden the elements of a power absolutely unlimited. It was a divine power; and the Almighty is wont to conceal rather than to display his resources. The winds which stir the depths of the ocean are unseen. The all-pervading agency which controls the heavenly bodies, and imposes its laws on every particle of matter upon or under the face of the earth, works without friction, and gives forth no sound.

It was for the glory of God that the excellent treasures of his truth were committed to earthen vessels, and it was favorable to the spread of the Gospel among the common peo-

ple that its ministers were too humble to provoke the jealousy and interference of the government. The Gospel was preached to the poor, and soon made effectual lodgment in the faith and the love of the multitude. Thenceforth it had foothold and power for progress among men. This is the order in which pure religion makes its advancements. Not many wise, not many rich are at first called. The leaven is hidden and works in the masses, and by-and-by rises to the higher places of society. Religion works upward, seldom downward; and they who adapt their plans and operations to the few, rather than to the needy many, are likely to discover, in due time, that they lack a basis for extensive usefulness and success. Stately towers, and gilding, and ornaments must totter when the winds blow and the floods come, if they do not rest upon massive and solid foundations. To follow more closely the figure of our parable, the process I have indicated may produce dainty confectionery for a few pampered appetites, but not wholesome bread for the thousands of hungry souls who are ready to perish.

2. Still guided by our parable, we may learn from it that it is the duty of the Church to make a strenuous use of the means of saving the people by spreading the Gospel. The leaven must be put in the meal in order that its peculiar powers may be brought into action, and that it may accomplish its proper function. It is else good for nothing. It is, as to all valuable results, as "salt without savor." Not only is the meal the proper material to be transformed into wholesome food by the leaven, but it is the only element to which the leaven is adapted and in which it can operate. I fear that our covetousness and our backslidings of heart are fast at work to transform us, as a Church, into Antinomians. We have, no doubt, a sound faith in the Gospel as the only way of salvation, but we honor it so much or so little, that we are doing decidedly less than others, our obligations considered, to propagate its doctrines and carry out its measures.

"How shall they hear without a preacher?" Will the Gospel save where it is unknown? Can the leaven work when it is not present? Is it our respect for the Gospel as the gift of Christ that makes us so passive in these days of great enterprises and great duties? We know the part which is assigned to the Church, and we know the mission of the Gospel. It must be preached in all nations. It must leaven the whole lump. How shall this be done, and when?

3. It is, no doubt, an object ever dear to Christ to see the kingdom of heaven established throughout the world. It is for this purpose, as well as to secure the salvation of individuals, that he brings it near unto every one of us. To the individual, as to the Church, "the kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven." It seeks incessantly to diffuse itself, to assimilate the mass to its own nature. "It is hid" in the heart. It often works for a season, unobserved, or, more properly, not well appreciated and understood by the subject of its operations. New, or stronger, or more vivid convictions take possession of his soul. A concern slight at first, but becoming progressively intense, is discovered to have been awakened by reflection, or by the word, or by affliction, or by sympathy, or by the more hidden means which God has chosen for making his light and truth manifest to the inner man. I think it may be affirmed of all such movements upon the human mind, however feeble and obscure they may be, that they bear with them always the primary elements and the free offer of spiritual life. Whoever will listen to the voice that now speaks to him in scarcely audible whispers; whoever will cry out heartily to him that so gently knocketh, "Come in, Lord Jesus, that I may sup with thee, and thou with me," does, by such a consent, admit into his soul an element all divine, which is of sufficient virtue to change him into a new creature in Christ Jesus. The coming of this manifestation, whether of clear conviction, or of stable purpose, or of earnest desire, is full demonstration of God's

merciful designs toward the sinner; and its nature is a pledge of its perfect ability to accomplish the entire mission on which it was sent. It is the kingdom of heaven which is come nigh unto you, and that kingdom is "like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal until the whole was leavened." The man who becomes conscious that such an influence is upon him, and who desires that it should bear him onward to eternal life, is likely to have many causes of difficulty and hinderance within himself, and as many or more from surrounding circumstances; but he may safely dismiss all fears about the *sufficiency* of the manifestation. It may be hidden, but it is omnipotent, and tends to progress. It will accomplish its work with all certainty in each obedient heart. This follows from the quality of the agent. It is divine, and the appreciated degree of its action is nothing. It is as leaven, and it can not but choose to work until "the whole is leavened."

4. There is another view of the "kingdom of heaven," which an inquiring mind should keep before its eye in distinct and full manifestation. *It is the leaven that transforms.* We frequently lose sight of this in the midst of means and the din of effort, and thus slight and offend the divine agency, which is likely to work mightily within us, in proportion as we maintain a lively sense of our entire dependence upon it. The analogy of our text is instructive. The woman puts the leaven in the meal. She carefully excludes all foreign mixtures, and especially such as might counteract the process sought for, and she exposes the mass to the proper temperature; and yet it is neither the due degree of heat and cold, nor the absence of foreign substances, nor the diligent oversight: it is the leaven alone that leaveneth the whole. I need not apply the lesson suggested by this illustration, farther than to exhort those who seek after God to be diligent in the use of such means as experience and the word of revelation prescribe; to fly from the chill-

ing influences of worldly, sinful pleasures and associations; to avoid the excitements of passion and the indulgence of appetite; remembering well, however, that in all this you are not accomplishing the proper work of the Spirit. You only abstain from interposing obstacles in His way, and present your souls in humble attitudes and favorable positions. It is right and wise to stand in the way when the Savior may be expected to pass; but be sure you cry aloud to him, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy upon me!"

5. Another idea is suggested by the text. The leaven to which the kingdom of heaven has so many instructive analogies "*leavens the whole lump.*" This is its nature and its design. That which fails to accomplish this is not leaven, but some worthless substitute. So it is with the "kingdom of heaven," that has come unto us, and it is indispensable to keep this in view. Christ is a great King, and will reign over his people; and the authority which he claims is absolute. It is incommunicable, and he will share it with none. It is universal, extending to every thought, and purpose, and aspiration. Let no man expect his favor—his indwelling grace, who does not heartily consent to an unreserved surrender. We may not know, or be able to state in detail, what rights and prerogatives belong to such a dominion, but we may assure ourselves that there are and can be no reserved rights for the subject. He gives up all or nothing. Let the inquirer remember this. When he prays for grace —for pardon—for the Spirit, let him never forget the conditions upon which they are promised. If he receives the "kingdom of heaven," all other dominion must cease. It is as leaven which works "till the whole is leavened." Whosoever has not embraced religion on these terms will realize discomfiture. Whosoever is not seeking to fulfill these conditions in good faith, is devising a fraud upon the Gospel, and practicing a terrible delusion upon his own soul.

6. Valuable instruction is also couched under the idea of

progression in the text. "Till the whole was leavened." It was a process which involved time. So is it with the kingdom of heaven that is "within you." The new convert very often has his first struggles with pre-established habits, or with some special form of temptation, and for some time these may give him pretty full employment. From this more exterior part of religion the fruitful Christian will very soon proceed to the essential work of conforming the inner man—the tempers, the tendencies, the tastes, the fears, the motives, the desires, to the law of Christ. It is not usual, perhaps, to make an even and uniform progress in every part and department of this interior field of labor. Some master-passion, or tendency, or inward hinderance is likely to attract attention at first, and the hands may be so full of one employment as to lead, almost of necessity, to the partial neglect of something else hardly less essential to the perfection of the Christian character. We may suppose an advance of this sort, namely, from the attainment of victory over one foe, and then another—from grace to grace—from strength to strength—a consecutive progress from one virtue to another, rather than in all virtues and graces alike. We must not, therefore, be too much discouraged if, after some months or years of experience, we make startling discoveries of lurking evils yet to be exterminated. If, nevertheless, we have been growing in grace, if the leaven has been spreading all the while, it is effecting its object and testing its efficacy, and it will, with your consent, "bring into captivity every thought." This progression is often very observable in our fellow-Christians, and seeing that God admits of progress, which supposes the lapse of time, we must concede as much in our charity. We must expect to meet, and to bear with great imperfections, and we may do so patiently, if we have good evidence that their number and enormity are diminishing under the divine process that is going on in the soul. All the evils of the life and the

heart are to be encountered at once, and with all our might; and if our piety is genuine, we shall obtain the victory over all, yet some may outlive others. Some are naturally, or by indulgence, stronger than others, and we are most led by the divine grace to the cultivation of such virtues as, at the time, we may most need.

This view of the work of religion as progressive is scriptural, and, therefore, a legitimate ground of encouragement to those who, though growing in grace, are yet groaning under the consciousness of many imperfections. It is incumbent on them, however, to remember well that "the kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven that leaveneth the whole lump." The Gospel is dishonored by lower views or designs on our part. He who does not aim to keep every commandment, violates the whole law; and he who does not triumph over every spiritual foe, falls below the designs of the Savior, and sins against his own soul. There is no place of safety, or repose, or innocence, short of this absolute and unreserved consecration to God. Many seem to stop satisfied after gaining some partial successes, or acquiring some ostensible reforms, or securing some decent habitudes. No delusion can be more manifest or disastrous than theirs. There is no safety but in perpetual diligence and advancement. He only is a true Christian who makes it the business of his life to obtain and to do the utmost good. The leaven spreads—the grace abounds. God works in those, and those only, who give all diligence to make their calling sure, who work out their salvation with fear and trembling. Even as the hidden but all-pervading leaven, so the Holy Spirit performs his work steadily and mightily in all such as, penitent for sin and leaning on the Savior, bring forth the fruits of obedience and sacrifice—who acknowledge that their bodies and souls are His who bought them, and who believe and act upon the belief that talents, and influence, and money are chiefly desirable, because they may be made instruments of promoting

Christ's kingdom, even the kingdom that is as leaven, and which seeks to diffuse itself, and to transform and sanctify all nations and all hearts.

XVIII.

THE TRUE DEFENSE AND GLORY OF A NATION.

A SERMON FOR THE FOURTH OF JULY, 1824.

Righteousness exalteth a nation.—PROVERBS, xiv., 34.

"IT is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," and his ministers are grievously away from their Master's work when they mingle in the ranks of faction, and prostitute the influence and the functions of their holy calling into auxiliaries of its mischievous purposes. They are commissioned to bear glad tidings to the poor, to preach repentance for the remission of sins, to reclaim the rebellious families of men into the acknowledgment and the exercise of that rightful allegiance unto God which they have denied, and from which they have departed; and out of the alienation and the thankless stupidity of the natural heart, to bring an acceptable offering of willing obedience and of fervent gratitude.

But the Gospel, which lays its greatest stress upon a future state of existence, is likewise concerned for our temporal interests; and while it points to heaven as the high object of our efforts and our hopes, it makes this world the theatre of trial and of preparation. That godliness which is stamped with the worth of eternity, and which animates the soul with the assurance of everlasting life, has likewise "the promise of the life which now is." That righteousness, which, associated with peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, establishes the kingdom of heaven in the heart of the believer, sheds a benign influence over all the walks of men, gladdens a fam-

ily, blesses a neighborhood, and "exalteth a nation." And if the apostle Paul did no violence to the Gospel when he inculcated, as a religious duty, upon the subjects of despotic power, the only political right which tyranny had left them —the right of obedience, I shall not exceed the spirit of that high example by attributing the same importance to the more sacred duties and the more valuable privileges which belong to us as citizens of a free republic.

I the more gladly avail myself of this yearly festival to speak upon a topic usually thought inconsistent with the sacredness of Sabbath ministrations, because I believe there is a growing and dangerous prejudice, which tends to abridge the privileges of the pulpit, and in the same degree to impair the security of our happy institutions. Our constitution of government very wisely forbids any political connection between Church and State—a connection which produces no other effect so directly as the conversion of the clergy into tyrants and hypocrites, and the degradation of the people into bigots and slaves. The opinion appears to be gaining ground among us, that this legal separation has wrought an actual divorcement between the religious and political interests of our country, and that the piety of the people has little or nothing to do with their prosperity. It is unfortunate that both the power and the right of correcting these erroneous sentiments, or of staying their fatal consequences, are fast passing out of the hands of those who could exercise them with the fairest probability of success. Every subject, connected however remotely with the politics of the day, is forbidden an approach to the pulpit, even by the most distant approximation. The most pernicious vices need only the example or the patronage of the candidates or the incumbents of office, in order that public opinion may fix upon the lips of the clergy the seal of perpetual silence. Sinful excesses, which, if committed under ordinary circumstances, would be thought to call most loudly for the interference of

a faithful and fearless ministry, may stalk forth with impunity through all the successive days and weeks of a pending election, may set a whole city in an uproar, may besot our age, and corrupt our youth, and prostrate the morals of our population. Should a faithful pastor dare to oppose this sweeping torrent of patronized corruption, to warn of their danger the flock committed to him by the Holy Ghost, and to bid them beware how they confide their own, and their country's, and their children's liberties to unprincipled and bloody men, his warning voice would be drowned in the din of clamorous rebuke, and his character blackened with the criminating charges of political preaching and aspiring priestcraft.

So wide is the separation which public sentiment has instituted between our religious and political interests. And how many, let me ask, of our orators, who have declaimed about liberty, and of our writers, who have published their speculations upon the subject, and of our patriots, who have labored for the public weal, have not utterly lost sight of the revealed truth, that "righteousness exalteth a nation?"

The improvement of our legal codes; our judiciary; our naval and military establishments; the multiplication of schools, and newspapers, and penitentiaries, are prescribed as infallible remedies for all our political and moral disorders, as the unfailing supports of our freedom, and as impassable barriers to despotism. It is a favorite maxim with our politicians, and they are glad when the sentiment is carried to the very ears of their constituents, that the people never do wrong except by mistake; that, when shown the right way, they always pursue it; that in exact proportion to their wisdom will be their virtue; and that, when the lights of education and of knowledge shall be universally enjoyed, then will our liberties be founded upon a rock, and the permanence of our happy form of government secured against all the accidents of time.

If it is not too late to question a doctrine which makes no allowance for the depravity of human nature, and which attributes to the influence of science what the Bible teaches us to expect only from the preaching of the cross, I would inquire by what reasonings and by what examples it is supported? Was Greece free in proportion as she was learned, and did the lights of knowledge and of liberty both shine and both go out together? No. The days of her Demosthenes were the days of her bondage. The prince of orators himself was silenced by the cup of Harpalus, and the polished sons of Athens were at once scholars and slaves.

Rome most rejoiced in the blessings of freedom when she called her consuls and dictators from the plow. It was not till after the literature of Greece and the refinements of Asia had passed through her gates, that her republican government was overthrown by the profligacy of her people and the ambition of her rulers. The Augustan age of her literature was an age of political degradation, and Virgil and Horace flourished under the patronage of a tyrant. Nor does the history of the world furnish a single example in support of the hypothesis on which we so confidently depend for the perfection and the preservation of our free institutions. The security of our liberty must be found in the virtue of the people, and that virtue must have its foundations in religious principle, and not in scientific endowments. And if our country shall advance in improvement, as I trust she will advance, until a thorough and effective system of instruction shall spread its influences over the face of our whole territory, and until the advantages of useful learning shall be universally enjoyed, still may the elements of corruption and of slavery remain untouched in the bosom of our population. And if this illuminating process could be carried forward till every citizen of our republic shall be led into all the mysteries of science, and adorned with all the accomplishments of literature, and until the doctrines of Grotius, and Vattel,

and Adam Smith, and Malthus shall be as commonly and familiarly known as those of Webster's Spelling-book, without the intervention of a better and more powerful agency, we might still remain as far as ever from the object of our bright anticipations. Public sentiment would indeed be refined and elevated, and public character dignified. Ribaldries and blasphemies, now uttered in doggerel, might then aspirê to the stanzas of Moore and Byron. They who are now led by appetite would be then led by taste. The demagogues who now make tippling-houses and muster-fields the arena of their electioneering exploits, might then achieve their purposes in sumptuous entertainments, and tasteful gardens, and literary soirees. Science may vary the forms of vice, and fashion its developments; it may divert the passions of a corrupted multitude from hurtful enterprises to others equally pernicious; but to establish a people in the ways of virtue, and secure the freedom and the purity of republican institutions, it is utterly incompetent. This is an achievement which demands a higher and a better agency, even the wisdom which cometh down from above, and the righteousness which exalteth a nation.

I would not speak lightly of the blessings of education, nor undervalue an interest vitally dear to our country and to the Church of God. It was a national calamity when, on a recent occasion, sectional jealousies were permitted to blast the noblest conception that ever honored our public councils, a proposition to make such an appropriation of the public lands as would have insured the benefits of competent instruction to our whole population. Such a liberal provision for our intellectual and moral exigencies would have commanded the admiration of the world and the gratitude of posterity. Every patriot and every Christian would exult to see schools and colleges established to the full extent of all our wants. It is of the utmost importance that the people should be well instructed; but, unless their knowledge be

turned to a religious account, it will prove but a worthless auxiliary to public virtue. The people should be taught to read, and then they should read the Bible. By all the light of their acquirements, and by all the urgency of Christian motives, should they be guided into that "fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom," and into that "righteousness which exalteth a nation."

I can most sincerely rejoice at the honors of genius and of authorship which are accorded to our fellow-citizens; and my best feelings are gratified at the signal triumph which our scientific and mechanical achievements have won over the prejudices of Europe. But I will not conceal a sentiment which to many will appear narrow and fanatical. I am persuaded that the establishment of a Bible Society, which circulates the Scriptures; or the institution of a Sabbath-school, which initiates the rising generation into an acquaintance with the word of God; or the building of a church, where the Gospel is to be faithfully preached; or the equipment and forth-sending of a domestic missionary, offers brighter anticipations to the patriot's eye, and firmer securities to our dear-bought liberty, than all the glories of discovery, and all the renown of letters. Literature may shed a bright lustre upon the character of a people, and give them a name abroad; it may mitigate the asperities of untutored nature, and refine and exalt the intercourse of society; but the progress of godliness creates and fortifies those virtues which are the only foundation of prosperity at home. It substitutes the law of love for the law of coercion. It purifies the streams and cleanses the fountain of elective influence, and establishes over all the public and private relations of man the guardianship of a heavenly superintendence.

The vast extent of our territory, the thinness of its population, and the principle of representation which so thoroughly pervades our institutions, will effectually secure us against the rashness and the rage of popular assemblies, so fatal to

the ancient republics. Our people will always have time to deliberate, and will always enjoy the means of information. But a sufficient pledge, that after deliberation they will decide honestly, and that they will be guided by the lights of knowledge into rectitude of action, can only be found in the prevalence of a righteousness which exalteth a nation.

The slavery of our country, if she is ever enslaved, is more likely to begin in the corruption of the people than in the encroachments of their rulers. Any violence offered to our Constitution would be discovered by an ever-watchful vigilance, and repelled by a spontaneous resentment. But it is very possible that the forms of our government shall be maintained inviolate, and its operations be conducted with uprightness and skill, and yet the people be enthralled in all the curses of bondage, even under the protection of our boasted institutions. We may become slaves without nobles and without kings. The prevalence of vice and immorality must be repressed by preventing and avenging laws. For the enforcement of these laws, courts must be organized and offices multiplied; soldiers must be enlisted, and sailors paid. To support such establishments, oppressive taxes and ruinous loans must be resorted to, and, for their collection and management, another devouring horde of pensioners will be created. Under such an oppression a nation can not be free. No matter what the character of its government, whether monarchical or republican, hereditary or elective, the rulers will be tyrants, and their subjects slaves. The very precautions of liberty, and the enactments of protection, will crush the people into an intolerable bondage.

Against these impending dangers, no remodeling of our government, no skillful adjustment of its departments, and no accurate balancing of its powers, can yield us security. Severer penalties and darker cells can not do it. Gibbets and penitentiaries may increase—they can not cure the evil. The Bible, and the Bible alone, reveals the only remedy;

and "the foolishness of preaching" has brought to light a secret in politics which the depth and the reach of mere human sagacity have never comprehended. This single announcement of the Gospel, "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to give an account of the deeds done in the body," brought home to the consciences of the people with an abiding prevalence, would be a better safeguard to our liberties than all the devices of our politicians, and all the terrors of our penal codes, and all the learning of our schools. Such a doctrine, believed and cherished, would counteract every tendency to national degeneracy. It would carry the healthful influences of uprightness, and charity, and patriotism throughout the mass of our population. It would establish in every man's bosom an impartial tribunal, which corruption could not bribe nor artifice mislead. It would fix an eye of wakeful and of searching inspection upon all the performances of his public history, and all the secrecies of his private walk. In a word, it would make him a good man and a good citizen, just because it made him a good Christian.

Let us suppose this moral preparation to be introduced into any given portion of our territory, so as to obtain over a majority of its inhabitants a thorough and predominant ascendency. I hazard nothing in saying that such an experiment would give you an erect, high-minded, and public-spirited people, watchful over their rulers, jealous of their liberties, and ready to assert them. Their high regard to the commandments of God and the rights of men would be a sacred pledge of fidelity and devotion to their country. By such a community, no duelist, with his blood-stained hands—no ruffian destroyer of domestic peace and female innocence—no profligate, whose principles have been dissolved in the guilty haunts of debauchery, would ever be made the repository of public confidence. They could not breathe so pure an atmosphere. It would be the death of their expectations. The splendors of eloquence and the riches of erudition would be deemed but

worthless substitutes for the nobler attributes of a sober head and an honest heart. Upright principles and an unblemished character would be the indispensable qualifications of successful candidates for office; nor would a virtuous people ever exalt to the high places of power those examples of splendid depravity which provoke the righteous judgments of Heaven, and corrupt the ingenuous and aspiring youth of our land with the winning blandishments of a tolerated and an honored profligacy.

Would to God that what I am compelled to offer in the forms of hypothesis were the history of our country—that our citizens might be persuaded, at length, that the firmest supports of their liberty must be found in their own virtue and godliness; and that while, with conscious pride, they are contemplating our growing navy and gallant army, our fortresses and our canals, our polished scholars and skillful statesmen, our agriculture, and commerce, and manufactures, as the certain tokens of national safety and prosperity, they might be brought to look into their own lives and their own hearts for surer testimony and more infallible conclusions. If this wish shall never be gratified, and if the sentiments I have uttered shall be thought a shallow artifice to magnify my office, or the vain hallucinations of a devotee rather than solid, practical principles, which can bear the scrutiny of reason and the test of experiment, I will yet rejoice that our country has produced at least one great man who has been their advocate—a name most honored and most worthy of honor on every recurrence of this glorious festival. Nor can it be said that he found and adopted, in the closet and in the schools, a doctrine which a better acquaintance with human affairs would have led him to reject; for he guided our destinies through many sore and bloody conflicts, and through many disastrous campaigns, to safety and independence. He presided at the birth of our Constitution, and in the midst of opposing factions, his wisdom and influence gave it estab-

lishment and success. No man better understood the value of victories and of warlike preparation. None labored more zealously or more successfully to promote the common welfare by protecting laws, upright tribunals, and public education; but the achievements of war and of policy he esteemed insufficient guaranties for our liberties, and whether he resigned the sword, or accepted the executive chair, or withdrew himself from the proffered honors of a grateful country, his language was gratitude to God, and his paternal admonition to the revering millions who hung upon his words was obedience to God's commandments. And amid that infidel forgetfulness of God which breathes through our public documents, and speaks in the messages and addresses of our rulers, it is cheering to the heart to find one illustrious exception. One man, who outstripped them all in the powers of his mind as far as he did by the splendor of his victories—whose political opinions, and foreign and domestic policy, have been permanently adopted by the voice of a united people, pointed to the religion of the cross as the dearest hope of our country and firmest security of its happy institutions.

Would you be the children of the Father of his Country? Would you be true patriots, the benefactors of a nation? You may not become such by being noisy, and important, and bustling at an election; nor by declaiming upon liberty in the market; nor by shouting the praises of a favorite candidate amid the fumes of intemperance and the clamors of a mob. If you would become a true patriot, become a true Christian. Do to others as you would have them do unto you; love your neighbor as yourself; live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this evil world. Pray to the Father for a high and a holy influence, which shall subjugate your passions, exalt your affections, and purify your heart. Teach your children to love God, and they will love their country; to keep his commandments, and they will prove obedient citizens. Thus may the humblest and the poorest of you all,

in the noiseless obscurity of his own private walk, more effectually promote the public welfare, than the vicious and infidel statesman, whose influence may guide the nation, and the fame of whose eloquence may be echoed by the wild solitudes of its remotest frontiers.

Oh, if our people were animated with such a spirit, and our nation exalted with such a righteousness, what a spectacle would this glorious jubilee exhibit to the admiring gaze of earth and of heaven! Ten millions of freemen, hastening with eager rivalry to Jehovah's courts, which their feet have trod with weekly joy, and from around the holy altars, where mercy had often regarded their penitence, and sealed forgiveness of sins, and imparted the Holy Ghost, speeding the sacrifice of a hearty and a common thanksgiving, acceptable unto God through Jesus Christ! The victories and deliverances of two bloody wars, and the blessings of forty years of prosperity and peace; the luxuries of commerce and the abundance of husbandry; the spread of the Gospel and the increase of learning; new cities and states, and the comforts of their happy population; all the glories of freedom, in which every man reigns the undisputed lord of his own habitation, and walks abroad the prince of his own possessions: all of these should pious recollection bring to swell the chorus of a nation's festival, and enrich the offering of a nation's gratitude.

XIX.

THE MEDIATION OF CHRIST.

If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. —ROMANS, v., 10.

THE subject here presented is the mediation of Christ. The text teaches that, since the Savior's ascension, he is ever engaged in promoting the salvation of men. This is one of the simple but deep truths of the Gospel, to which we are specially called to revert at the present time. We must review first principles, and see what there is of the supernatural, the spiritual, and the divine in our religion—what the Bible authorizes us to expect and believe when so many substitute symbols and forms for the Savior's agency, and thus obscure the simple doctrines of the cross with dark mysticism, hiding and fettering their divine efficiency in traditionary dogmas and ritual observances.

Sincere Christians, too, ought to maintain the most clear and practical views with regard to the agencies connected, in God's economy, with the working out of their salvation. Forgetting or indistinctly perceiving these, they often dwell in doubt or darkness—beat the air, and almost seem to have lost the Savior out of their system. They think of the higher privileges of the attendants of Christ's personal ministry, and regard them as having been more favored—as having had more facilities to aid their faith. They inquire, "Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above); or who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead)."

The mediation of Christ is exclusively a scriptural doc-

trine. It has no dependence on reason or philosophy—no evidence but in the revealed word, and in Christian experience. We must look reverently to God's word for its teachings upon this subject.

1. Christ interposes in our salvation by his presence in the assemblies of his people. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."* This implies more than the mere omnipresence of Christ, to affirm which was to say nothing to those who recognized his supreme divinity. It is a special presence, to make prayer and worship effectual; and because of which, prayer is answered, as we learn from the previous verse: "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven; *for* where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." This is such a presence as seems incompatible with the incarnation, and the voluntary restraints thereby imposed upon our divine Redeemer, from which he is released in his exaltation. We do well to receive this simple truth as a fact in religion—not to refine upon it, but to trust and rejoice in it; to believe in a near and present Savior—one in our midst—in our assembly—by our side—in our hearts, to hear our whispers, our desires—communing with us. What honor does this confer, and how highly should we prize these humble assemblages, where we may always have a presence and influence better than eloquent preaching—than imposing multitudes! We should expect Christ here, even more than at home in our closets, for such is his own most gracious promise.

2. Christ interposes to save by his presence with his ministers. "Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."† This, too, is a special presence, designed, as

* Matthew, xviii., 20. † Ibid., xxviii., 19, 20.

the context shows, to make preaching effectual. Its importance is seen in the fact that preaching has no natural tendency to renew the heart, and yet this is its main object. We are agents—stewards—embassadors for Christ, with specific instructions—with no discretion as to doctrines or conditions. We are to treat all as sinners—rebels; to preach truths known to be offensive—hateful—foolishness to the natural man. We instruct, rebuke, exhort. We reason, expostulate, range over the wide field of theology, gathering argument, or warning, or encouragement as we may. We are critical, vehement, pathetic. We threaten, persuade, beseech. We stand "between the living and the dead"—"weep between the porch and the altar"—"become all things to all men;" and we do all under a full knowledge that there is no efficacy in the manifold and ever-varying effort—no power to change a heart—none to induce love—none to slay enmity to God. The one object of saving sinners is as far above us at the end as at the beginning. The power is of God, not of us—not of effort or appliances. Our word, too, "is a savor of death unto death." It damns when it does not save the sinner. And we must not hold our peace, terrible as are the conditions under which we prosecute an unsuccessful ministry. "Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel." Of all men, the minister of Christ would be most miserable if left to himself. But Christ is with him. He hears the great Shepherd's voice, "Lo, I am with you always." His fears vanish. Out of weakness he becomes strong. Jesus teaches his hands to war and his fingers to fight. The word becomes quick and powerful. The Goliath falls before a stripling armed with a sling. Just in proportion as we appreciate this divine presence, and honor and trust it, does it become mighty—omnipotent.

If we are right in this matter—if we utter the words of our message, truly expecting the co-operation of a present and almighty Savior—if we stand still expecting to see the sal-

vation of God, hide self, and give prominence to the Savior—the work of preaching becomes glorious, and it is seen and felt to be the power of God and the wisdom of God. Hence it is that we frequently see plain and uneducated men successful, and eloquent and learned divines unfruitful.

3. Christ, as an exalted Mediator, is the dispenser of the Holy Spirit—the divine Agent, by whose intervention all the benefits of the atonement once made upon the cross are brought into contact with the soul of man, to transform his nature, and to produce in him the graces of religion. The importance of such an instrumentality is incalculable—the necessity absolute; for it is the peculiar province of the Holy Spirit to convince of sin, to regenerate, to bear witness to our adoption, to sanctify, to help our infirmities, to teach, and to comfort.

The Gospel, in its approaches to the human mind, meets at once with an obstacle strictly insuperable. It addresses the deaf, who have ears, but hear not; makes its manifestation to the blind, who have eyes, but see not. It appeals to hearts that have waxed fat, and will not understand. Its audience has fallen too low in moral depravity to comprehend or heed its voice. It addresses the spiritually dead. Sin has made an impassable gulf between the spiritual want and the divine provision—the disease and the remedy. Here, then, is the demand for the intervention of spiritual agency. The imbecility of the sinner is to be removed. His paralyzed moral agency is to be resuscitated and reinvigorated, and he is to be lifted up to a vantage-ground, where he may effectually perform the functions of his high probation. A measure of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. Now this ministry of the Spirit must be so proportioned and adjusted as not to interfere with the freedom of the will—the conditions of our moral nature. It must, in God's economy, help, but not control—draw, but not force, the free will. The ministering of the Spirit is, therefore, a work appropriate to omniscience. Christ is the dispenser of these influences. He

knows what is in the heart of man—its capabilities, its weakness, its strength, its obligations; and to all these he wisely apportions his grace. Thus, when we come forward as his ministers, we speak to those upon whom a light has shone, in whom a way has been prepared of the Lord. The conscience of the sinner responds to the message from the Gospel. We hold up the glass, and he sees what manner of person he is. The convictions implanted by the Spirit correspond with the announcements of the word. Our every utterance of Gospel truth wakes up an echo in the depths of his soul. He listens to fearful, startling sounds. God within him answers to God without him. A fearful controversy is awakened. Great searchings of heart take place. His conscience yields, though his heart may still resist the demonstrations of the Spirit. The sinner feels what he should feel, and what he who brings the Gospel message to him should feel, that the questions at issue are between his soul and his God. So, too, Christ gives the Spirit to regenerate. He gives the Spirit of adoption, of witnessing, of sanctification, of rejoicing, all in due time and measure, and all adapted, with infinite skill, to the special demands and emergencies of each individual.

4. Christ is our Priest to reconcile us to God. We learn on this high, mysterious subject, that he has a perpetual Priesthood—that he is Priest forever, and that he exercises his priestly office in heaven, in the immediate presence of God. "Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."*

Furthermore, we are taught distinctly that he offers his own crucified body forever before God as a sacrifice for sin—the atonement for the world: "who needeth not daily, as those high-priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's; for this he did once when he offer-

* Hebrews, ix., 24.

ed up himself."* "For every high-priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices, wherefore it is of necessity that this man have also somewhat to offer."† "But Christ being come, an high-priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."‡ I would not multiply words on a theme like this. I would adore—I would trust—I would wax confident. What condescension to our infirmities! Our crucified Lord is before us in the divine presence—at the throne of grace. The atonement which we plead for our acceptance—the Lamb slain—speaks in silent, impressive eloquence in our behalf. The holy victim, whose blood sprinkled and sealed the New Covenant, is present as a witness before the eyes of the parties to be reconciled. The doctrine and its uses are embodied in strains worthy the lips of a seraph, in that beautiful hymn:

"Arise, my soul, arise,
Shake off thy guilty fears;
The bleeding Sacrifice
In thy behalf appears.
Before the throne thy Surety stands,
Thy name is written on his hands."

5. Another ministry belonging to the Savior's mediatorial and priestly office is thus set forth by the apostle: "But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."§ "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Christ prays for us. We are assured, too, that his prayers will be successful. He affirms that the Father always hears his prayers. And it

* Hebrews, vii., 27.
† Ibid., viii., 3.
‡ Ibid., ix., 11, 12.
§ Ibid., vii., 24, 25.

must be so. It follows from the divine unity and relations. It follows from the Savior's glorious divinity. The Father is well pleased with him. Yea, unto him is committed all power in heaven and on earth. We have only to take shelter in Christ—to enter into alliance with him by faith and love—to choose him as our Advocate, and the door of mercy and grace is ever wide open to us. We know we have the things we ask for, according to his will. We may infer from his prayer for his disciples, as recorded in John's gospel, what is the purport of his prayers in our behalf. He then asked for those whom he was about to leave, that they might be kept from evil—that they might dwell together in unity—that they might be sanctified—that the love of God might be shed abroad in their hearts—and that they might be brought to heaven, to be with Christ and behold his glory.* All these benefits are sure to the Christian. He may ask them with confidence, for Christ seconds his petitions.

6. Finally; Christ authorizes us to plead his name and ask blessings on his account at the throne of grace. "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you."† Here our powers are absolutely unlimited—our claim infinitely strong. It is as good as if Christ's righteousness and dignity were all our own. Whatever he might obtain he makes over to us. Could we stand before God, and plead a sinless nature, and a blameless life, and an entire consecration to him, our plea would not be so good; for these were the Savior's attributes, and each, in him, was infinitely perfect and divine. These we hold. This plea of all that is Christ's is our fortress. It absolutely excludes despair, or even doubt. Only let us distinctly apprehend and plead the name of Jesus—not our righteousness—not our sorrows—our wants—our perseverance—our groans—our tears. Put these far away, and speak only of Christ, and him crucified. Our acceptance on these terms is Christ's right by covenant and

* John, xvii. † Ibid., xvi., 23.

purchase. His glory is concerned in our success. He is our Advocate, and has a common interest; our elder brother, and has a common sympathy. Our sinfulness is no hinderance, but even a condition to success. He died only for sinners, and mediates to reconcile sinners to God.

In conclusion, I return to the argument of the apostle, and I apply it to all as a moving exhortation: "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." To real Christians, the doctrine of the text is enough. They need no other encouragement. I see not how God himself could furnish stronger. The ascended Redeemer is our Priest —our Advocate; ever living—ever active to make the sacrifice once made upon the cross effective to our salvation.

The argument is for all who will consent to take Christ as their Savior. He has done much for them; and that, too, when they were enemies—before they asked—when they spurned and rebelled. The great obstacle is removed. There might have been doubts, at the first, whether God would give his Son—whether Christ would yield up his life to save sinners from perdition. It might have been his choice to destroy the race, or to leave it to its fate. One effort of retributive justice—of omnipotent vengeance—would have swept the earth clear of its guilty tenants, and relieved the universe of the foul stain of sin. This might have been God's choice. When the contradiction of sinners, the agony of the garden, the unrighteous tribunal of Herod, the crown of thorns, the reproach, the sufferings, the curse of the cross, were yet before the blessed Redeemer, who could have guessed that he would bow his righteous soul to the infinite sacrifice for sinners and enemies? We know he was "sorrowful, even unto death." He wished, if possible, that the cup should pass from him. His flesh shrunk from the infinite agony, even when the spirit was willing. It was a dreadful alternative, and it was a strange decision, which doomed the

Just to die for the unjust. But now the agony is over. The cup has been drained to its bitter dregs. He has trodden the wine-press alone. He has triumphed over death, and led captivity captive. He has ascended up on high, where he ever liveth to make intercession for us. Now the door of mercy is open to all. Our chance of escape is as favorable as we could wish. The stone is rolled away from our tomb, and the Savior's voice calls us forth to life. "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

I will not speak to-day of penalties and retributions. Bear with you to your homes the invitations of mercy. Think by the way, in your closets, on your beds, of Him who died—of Him who lives, and prays to save your souls.

XX.

ON SECRET SINS.

Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults.—PSALM xix., 12.

THERE is a class of minds prone to discouragement, and poorly sustained by animal spirits, to which a frequent or habitual recurrence to the brighter aspects of their religious condition may be salutary, or even necessary. Most men, however, are but too prone to dwell on these flattering views, and need to be called back from complacency and joyousness to the contemplation of their deficiencies. It is both more useful and more safe to think on our sins than on our virtues, and so to incite ourselves to new attainments, rather than to congratulate ourselves on the excellence of our present state. David often triumphed in God; but he seems, also, to have dwelt much on his own unworthiness and guilt.

"My sin," he cries, "is ever before me." He *studied* to know the mysteries and the depths of his heart's corruptions, and inoessantly pleaded with God to be "kept back from presumptuous sins," and to be "cleansed from secret faults."

An acquaintance with our sins seems to be indispensable:

1. In order that we may be able to confess and repent of them, which are conditions of forgiveness.

2. As an incitement to humility, which is likely to be profound and effective in proportion to our sense of guilt and unworthiness.

3. As an inducement to seek after entire sanctification and holiness: We must know the malignity and extent of the disease before we can fully appreciate the importance of finding a perfect cure.

4. We must know much of our sinfulness in order to a right appreciation of the value, excellency, and necessity of Christ's atonement.

Yet this knowledge, on all accounts so important, is of difficult attainment:

1. Because "the heart is deceitful and desperately wicked —who *can* know it?" It is "deceitful," and would not only conceal its guilt from others, but from itself. As we are ashamed to confess our sins, so we are ashamed to be conscious of them. We feel that to persist in known sin is a great offense against God, and, therefore, spontaneously choose not to know them.

There is often, also, a voluntary effort to overlook sin when recognized, and when partially or fully awake to its existence within us, we naturally apologize for it, and make the least of it. We blame our strong passions—our feeble purposes—our bad education—our strong temptations.

The heart is not only "deceitful," but it is "desperately wicked." There is a bad courage in some men, and a measure of it in some professing Christians, which induces them to put the whole matter of their sins away from their

thoughts. They say, perhaps, that they can not help sinning—they are made as they are, and suppose they shall live as they list. They brave the rebukes of the reprover and of conscience, and say, "Am I not a free man? Am I not my own? I beg you to leave me to manage my own matters in my own way."

2. Others see that their sins are great—that their strength is small, and are discouraged from all attempts to grapple with the evil. They will confess every thing, but they despair of amendment. They expect to continue in sin—they do not hope to be "cleansed from secret faults," and therefore think it little worth while to try to "understand their errors." They look upon their sins in a mass—in the gross, and not in detail, relying on some general amnesty, some large act of the divine mercy for toleration in life and sanctification in the article of death.

3. Another great obstacle in the way of understanding our errors is our low and insufficient appreciation of the sinfulness of sin. We "measure ourselves by ourselves," and not by God's law. He is "of purer eyes than to look upon iniquity." He can not endure the presence of sin in his dominions. It is the thing that his soul hateth. He made men for his own glory, and loved and blessed them as his own children; and yet, for the one sin of Adam, doomed the whole race to death. Even the more excellent race, that stood about his throne and did his pleasure, when they kept not their first estate, he cast into "chains of darkness." He "prepared eternal fire for the devil and his angels." Holiness is the habitation of God's throne. When the glorified saints and the angels offer their highest anthems, they cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." Now all sin is the opposite of holiness—its antagonist. It is the one thing against which God has set himself in array. The law was introduced to prevent and condemn it—the Gospel to atone for it, and abolish it.

Sin crucified the Redeemer. Such statements are calculated to show its enormity, and yet none but those who are taught of God can appreciate its malignity. No man, perhaps, can feel the justice and necessity of the eternal destruction of sinners, until he has seen the atrocity of sin in the light of God's holiness. They who are wont to gaze with adoring wonder on that high, divine attribute, may perhaps see how the ruin of all transgressors were a less evil than the casting of a shade on God's holiness. They who have seen sin in such a light, are, at least, prepared to regard it the chief of evils, and strive and pray for deliverance from its dominion and corruptions.

Acting under impulses so high and holy, men soon reform their lives, cease from the usual manifestations of sin or vice, and perhaps adopt the opposite virtues. The real Christian stops not here. He soon disposes of all this as a preliminary business, and finds that his principal work as well as difficulty is with "secret faults," as they are called in contradistinction from open, "presumptuous sins." It may be useful to some who would engage in this good work, if we spend a few minutes in the consideration of what our text calls "secret faults."

1. The most obvious class of these is made up of sins concealed from the world, or, if known, not condemned by it. When our bad actions have the double character of sin and crime, or even vice, it requires neither painstaking nor great skill to perceive their demerit. The world joins its voice with the teaching of God's word, and men who make any pretensions to piety feel the necessity of conforming to this two-fold law. But with regard to many things there is no such outward, clamorous monitor, and yet they are equally sinful. The world has no voice to condemn the love of the world. Society, in a commercial age, thinks indulgently of covetousness, except when it takes the most odious forms; yet God's word ranks these and uncharitableness, and envy, and sensuality, along with lying, and theft, and robbery, and

adultery, and murder, and teaches that they are such enormous sins as will exclude from heaven. Now I fear that many Christians look indulgently upon these sins of the heart, who would recoil with horror from presumptuous sins. When the world concurs with the Bible, they listen reverently; but when God speaks alone, they heed him less. They are careful not to do what would shock human spectators, but what offends God they are less afraid of. This bad distinction becomes a habit with many, and not a few of the tragedies of sin are wrought out before no witnesses but God and the erring soul. Men heap up wrath, in the secret places of their own hearts. Fearful histories there are of souls undone, which will only be read when "the books shall be opened" at the final judgment. There the "*thoughts* of all hearts" shall be revealed. Over all this it is quite possible that some well-meaning superficial Christians may slumber. They have looked no deeper than to outward sins. They have reformed far enough to hush the clamors of men, and their own consciences are also hushed; and they seem to think themselves doing very well because nobody reproaches them.

2. Sins of *omission* are but little noticed by the world, and they are very liable to be forgotten or unheeded by the transgressor; and yet the sinner is to be damned for duties neglected. The final sentence is, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not." The *unprofitable* servant was cast into outer darkness. It is a first duty to do no harm, but he who neglects to do all possible good is a great sinner in the sight of God. The first wins not heaven—he earns hell. Now a multitude of Christians have evidently advanced little farther than this negative Christianity. They have ceased to do evil, but have scarcely thought it incumbent upon them

to do good; yet this is to be the rule of the final judgment. They can glorify God only by bringing forth much fruit. All are bound to do good *as they have opportunity;* that is, as *much as they can.* There is no other rule. What they can do—how much they can do, they know, and God knows. It is a secret to others, but neglect will turn out to be none the less ruinous on that account. I fear this part of my account more than all. Perhaps every man of us has, by his neglect, been the means of damning a soul. It may be that many a minister has, by his omissions, damned several, if not many. Here probably is the theatre, the hidden theatre, where most of the secret faults of believers are perpetrated. In God's wonderful plan, the putting forth of an effort—the offering of a prayer—the giving of a dollar, may be the instrument of promoting objects dearest to the Savior's heart. To omit these duties is to thwart them—to wound Him—to restrain his grace—to blast eternal interests. "Who can understand his errors" of this kind? O God, cleanse us from "secret faults."

3. Another class of "secret faults," which it demands great and prayerful vigilance to prevent or detect, is composed of our *motives.* They confessedly give character to actions, which are sinful if the motive be impure or mixed. Now professed Christians are perpetually performing duties, which it would be sinful to omit, on such grounds as spoil them. Beginning, perhaps, with a sincere desire to perform their duties aright, men frequently find themselves, ere they are aware of it, acting on low and common principles in the most strictly religious of their pursuits. They act without special views merely from negligence or custom. They act to gratify selfish ends, or obsequiously to carnal tempers or appetites. They become partisans in religion, and act from passion or prejudice. Too busy with the deed to think of much else, they are, unperceived by themselves, plunged into the "secret sin" of bringing an impure offering to God. With

Him intention is every thing. This made the widow's mite more valuable than the coffers full of gold. This gained for David the credit and the blessing of building the temple, though he was forbidden to lay the first stone. There can be no substitute for right motives—for wrong ones no palliation. God is never more insulted than with the forms and seemings of true piety when the substance is wanting. To see a man on his knees, contentedly full of worldly thoughts and aims—to see a minister preaching Christ crucified, careful, chiefly, that he may win praises for eloquence or argument, is a spectacle that might call down avenging fire from heaven. And yet these are dangers to which we all are liable. I know of no security against sliding off upon this accursed ground but an unslumbering watchfulness, an incessant crying for help, and a direct and conscious reference of all we do or aim at to the will of God and the glory of Christ. And be it remembered, that it will not answer to shun the performance of a duty for want of a right motive. That were to perpetrate a double sin. We must have the right motive, and act upon it.

4. We are held responsible for all the *consequences* of our omissions and misdoings, even though it be impossible to foresee them or estimate their results. This is clearly taught in the parable of the unprofitable servant, of whom the interest which he had neglected to secure, as well as the principal, was sternly required. He was judged by what he *ought* to have done. Estimated by this rule, who can understand the number or the magnitude of his errors? Every man is responsible for the perfect consecration to God of every talent all his lifetime—of all his influence, and all that he might have acquired—of all his knowledge, and all he might have attained—of all his opportunities, and all he might have secured—of all his property, and all he might have gained or saved. And on precisely these terms we are living and working out our probation; on them the judgment will proceed.

5. Sins may become secret by being *habitual.* Actions which we often perform cease to excite our attention; and, as the performance of them passes unheeded, so, by-and-by, unless the greatest vigilance is used, the quality of them also ceases to attract our notice. Even in those cases where the conscience at first condemns, its clamors subside and its light grows dim as habit becomes strong. Then men can live as they list, and go on, from day to day, in the bad performance of duties, in their total neglect, or even in the commission of open and presumptuous sin, without feeling, or even suspecting, that any thing is amiss. Yet their conduct does not change its character by becoming habitual. An action that was sinful at first, grows no less so by being repeated a thousand times. On the contrary, it is a thousand times more wicked and insulting to God. The man not only sins, but he perverts his very nature. He *burns* the sin into his soul. He mars God's image there.

"Who can understand his errors?" who can rightly estimate their number or demerit? Let us remember the rule by which we *ought* to live, and by which we are held accountable—perfect love and service to God, and love to our neighbor, as true and as effective as that which we bear to ourselves. Every departure from these inexorable laws, however concealed or forgotten, comes under condemnation. Who can answer for one of a thousand of his transgressions?

Our subject points to our only refuge and only remedy. "Cleanse THOU me from secret faults." He who does not seek and find a refuge in Christ's atoning sacrifice and pardoning mercy, must bear the entire burden. He who flees to Christ, O how much does he receive from him! All of these amazing deficiencies find satisfaction in his merits.

How dangerous to be out of Christ! Who can bear the great burden of his sin for one hour? We should cry perpetually for cleansing—for absolution. We should feel our need of Christ for *all* sins, secret or open, known and unknown,

past and present. Give him the glory. He will bear the burden. I see no other ground of hope but in such a Savior. I rejoice to know that all fullness dwells in Him. His blood cleanses from all sin. He saves to the uttermost. There is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. He is the only refuge. The best must be lost without Him. And yet the most sinful may be so washed, so purified, so "cleansed," as to serve Him to all well-pleasing—as to live without sinning any more—as to do all things to the glory of God.

XXI.

ON MUTUAL INFLUENCE.

None of us liveth to himself.—ROMANS, xiv., 7.

ALL men, or nearly all, *apparently* live to themselves. They form their plans of life, and prosecute them, with exclusive reference to personal ends. Self-love may be said to comprehend the love of pleasure, of ease, of influence, of distinction, and it is the chief motive that leads men on in quest of money, reputation, knowledge. Every man is the centre of his own system. To this point every thing is drawn. Here he accumulates his honors, his gains, his means of enjoyment. He rears up walls around his possessions. He gives smiles and greetings to those without, and but little besides. And the world has fashioned its maxims upon its spirit and practice. "Every man must take care of himself." They are thought to do well who attend exclusively to their own business and interests, leaving other people to manage theirs.

Under impulses and teachings such as these, men would become anti-social and isolated in the midst of the crowded world, but for antagonist influences which act upon them perpetually with the force and authority of a law of their

nature and a decree of the Almighty. In spite of himself, and often unknown to himself, every man is living to his species and to God. While he makes himself, and seems to himself really to be, the object of all his efforts and aspirations, the centre to which all things within the sphere of his interests and anxieties is tending, he is, in fact, a fountain of influences, which operate in all directions, producing manifold results of incalculable moment. Let us take, for illustration, the example of a private man living in unostentatious quietness in the bosom of his own family. Does he "live to himself?" His looks, the tones of his voice, are not only making or marring the happiness of the domestic circle, but molding the tempers and inspiring the hearts of his children —of those who will not only be made better or worse, happy or miserable through life by these influences, but are likely to hand them down to their own offspring, to be perpetuated in some form or extent through all future time. In this same way, his conversation, his habits, his morals become models for the formation of character, and are likely to give their coloring to generations unborn. What immense results flow from the decision by the parent of a question which every parent must decide, as to what instruction and education his children shall have—in what school they shall be taught, what church they shall frequent, what books they shall read, what company they shall keep. Beyond this circle the humblest has also his influence. The men with whom he bargains in the market or the store, or by the side of whom he works in the shop, are insensibly affected by his language, his spirit, his principles, his maxims, and his entire example; and these, too, will diffuse their influence, good or bad, sending it off upon whole communities, and onward through all the future.

What a mighty interest is it whether this plain man be virtuous or vicious, be wise or foolish! Above all, how fearfully interesting the question whether he be a Christian or

not. If he is, then his sons and daughters may imbibe piety, purity, reverence for God, love to Christ, eternal life from his spirit, words, example, and prayers. If he is not, they will likely be infidel, or profligate, or at least irreligious, and, besides diffusing these influences around and after them, are likely to be damned.

If a Christian, how vastly important that he be one of the highest, purest stamp! His children will remember and copy his religion long after he is dead, and it is likely to be the type for future generations. The fervency of his prayers —the tenderness and charitableness of his spirit—his ample sacrifices—his fervent love to Christ and his cause, what a glorious memorial—what a rich and enriching inheritance for his children! What a curse and a blight to send down on the future, and out on the present, the influence of formality, bigotry, worldliness, and covetousness! Every man is the model of somebody else. His piety and its developments form the measure and gauge for others. There are individuals in all churches whose opinions, examples, and religious tone act on many, if not all, associated with them —who act upon the body much as others do on single persons. Their advocacy of any measure or good work insures success, while their silence or neutrality is equivalent to the seal of reprobation. The measure of their zeal or liberality, also, becomes a guide to the Church. They thus give tone to the whole—are the mainspring of events, often without suspecting it or desiring it. They live to others—to their brethren—to the Church—to the cause, in the most important sense, whether they will or not. They have the responsibility of determining questions when they take no part.

So it is made good that "none of us liveth to himself." We live to men—we live to society—to our families—to God, whether we choose it or not. It is the law of our being and of our religion. In this, as in all things, we are parts of a great whole. We belong to a system. We have a part to

act. We must perform it—we do perform it in any and in all events. We are responsible for the influences that proceed from us, whether we give any concern to the matter or not. We have no option in this. Our liberty lies not in choosing whether we will live to ourselves or not, but whether our influence, always active, shall be for good or for evil.

That we may satisfy this high responsibility, we must understand and recognize our position. We can not escape from it. It is not humility to disclaim the importance belonging to it. The most obscure man has probably the destiny of immortal beings in his keeping. The humblest man is the source of impulses that will still be felt in heaven and hell. The poorest man has treasure that, in God's economy, may be instrumental in converting families or nations. The widow's mite has brought millions to the altar. They who have no portion but poverty and suffering, awaken joys in heaven and enrich the Church below by their examples of patience and faith.

We live to our families. We owe them the nurture and admonition of the Gospel—all that we can do to purify, enlighten, comfort, and save them. We should consecrate every son and daughter to God, and beautify them with holiness.

We live to the Church. We owe it personal services—spotless examples—wise counsels—liberal sacrifices.

We live to the present. We must help to exalt and bless our race. We must do good to all as we have opportunity. We must care for our species—our neighborhood—our country.

We live for future generations and future churches. We form institutions for them. We sow the seed for their harvests. We send onward the spirit that is to animate them—the light that is to guide them. We may not sow tares. That spirit must not be the spirit of error; that light should not be darkness. Our children are to be the fathers and mothers of the future. Let us train them well. Our church-

es will be the type of theirs. Let them be adorned and enriched with holiness.

Finally, we live to Christ. Let us not put him to shame. Let us not crucify him afresh. Let us gather in the purchase of his blood, that he may have joy and be satisfied. Let us present our bodies and spirits a living sacrifice to him. Let us not call the things we possess our own, but his. Let us be glad of all opportunities to glorify his name. Let us esteem that work the most delightful—that treasure the most precious, which we consecrate on his altar. Let us be glad when one shows how we may do or give what may promote his cause. Then shall we live to purpose—worthy of our high destiny. The life which we now live will not be to ourselves nor to the flesh. It will be an offering holy and acceptable to Him who hath died for us, and who hath provided for us, by the shedding of his most precious blood, all the treasures of a life eternal.

XXII.

DILIGENCE IN BUSINESS FAVORABLE TO ACTIVE PIETY.

Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.—ROMANS, xii., 11.

THE Gospel takes care of the moralities and virtues of society. It inculcates domestic, social, and political duties, omitting nothing really important and useful. No system of morals is so comprehensive, so plain, or so effective.

The Gospel encourages and enforces, not by making the performance of moral duties means of salvation, or grounds of justification, or the price of heaven; it regards them as fruits and tests of faith, as conditions of acceptance, and as the measures of reward, and it secures all by the weight of

its divine authority and sanction. Every action thus becomes part of piety, and, whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we are to do all to the glory of God.

In the text diligence in business is inculcated on the same authority as religious zeal and our duty toward God. It thus becomes a part of our religion. It is important to the well-being of society, as the basis of all improvement and civilization—to families, as the means of support; to individuals, as promoting the development of talent, of character—as the means of usefulness, of happiness. So, too, all benevolent and religious enterprises derive their means from industry.

1. Its habits are favorable to piety. Industry is practical rather than speculative. It is prompt, bold, systematic. It expects nothing without effort and means. Worldliness is the great danger of practical men; but, when aroused, they more readily and directly embrace religion, and make more rapid progress. Though always busy, they have time for religion. These people are more liberal than the inactive, who depend on their accumulations. The men of leisure soon bring their style of living up to their income, be that what it will, and so dare not give, as they can not earn. Diligent men rely on their own heads, and hands, and God's blessing, and so have permanent resources. They trust the future, since these will last as long as their wants. These men give in higher proportion than others.

2. These habits of diligence and fearless energy, carried into religion, greatly promote "fervency of spirit." Practical men are accustomed to extend to various pursuits efforts and regards proportioned to their importance. The farmer thinks more of the year's crop than of an hour's amusement; the tradesman is more solicitous about the order of his books and his shop, than about the adjustment of his hair or his ruffles. These are common-sense views reduced to practice and incorporated with the habits, and such men, more frequently

than the indolent and idle, carry them into religion. They are more likely to be mightily in earnest, and earnestness is the pledge of progress and success.

It is absurd to be cool, unmoved, stoical in religion, which involves such interests and topics as heaven—hell—the judgment—our duty to God—our gratitude to Christ—the eternal happiness of our neighbors—our children—which consists in "faith, hope, charity"—our highest powers and deepest sentiments—inculcates sorrow for sin—"strife"—brokenness of heart—agonizing prayer—"warfare"—"instant prayer"—which *is* a race—a wrestling—a fight—a dying to the present—newness of life. What wonder that men do not quite abandon minor cares? Their wants hold them down.

Success in religion depends on zeal—fervor. Cold preaching never does any good. Cold prayers are not answered. Cold efforts effect nothing. On the contrary, the simplest ministry of God's truth, if fervent, is powerful. A fervent people are always prosperous. These deep sympathies melt the hardest heart. God's most honored instrumentality is such a people. Preacher and people together, burning with the love of Christ and of souls, constitute the favored instrumentality. This is irresistible—it makes the word irresistible through the Spirit.

Fervor of spirit makes our progress easy, diminishes all obstacles, facilitates all good works. A little piety is a burden—entire, devoted piety, a triumph. We are borne on the tide—great principles sustain us of themselves. God helps such, gives his Spirit to them, &c.

3. This fervor of spirit should be employed in "serving the Lord." It is only dangerous when it is aimless—when it has nothing to do—when it is left to prey upon itself, or to conjure up visions and revelations for its own guidance. Consecrated to God's service, it becomes a mighty impulse—a holy baptism. It invigorates faith, and nerves the arm. It makes every well-directed blow tell with effect.

4. We should bring the *system* of business to duties—to prayer—reading—self-examination—public worship—adapt means to ends. Think what depends on us—what on God—what on prayer. Use the right means. Expect God's help when promised to every effort—sacrifice—gift. Work on a plan. Be orderly. Have a time, and a purpose, and a proportion for every thing.

5. "Be fervent" in "serving the Lord." Do all things with your might. There is no danger of too much zeal in this service. Entire consecration of soul, body, and substance is our duty. Take up every good work. God has no means or instrument but his people. They must do all his will. What they leave out of their plan will never be done. The more they do, the more they can do. Just as a limb grows strong and cunning by use, so is it with the Church. It can, by God's grace, do all that He would have done. When all hearts are warm, and all hands busy, the machine is perfect, wanting nothing. A cold heart is worse than a weak head or an empty purse. All must feel—must work, pray, give. There must be no non-conductors.

I beg you, brethren, to apply these doctrines to the interest which I now present to your notice.

The Wesleyan University; its means and wants; its demands:

1. On the Church. We want educated men for writers—for teachers—missionaries—for preachers—to represent us in the professions, &c.

2. We must provide education and educated men for the millions who hear us, in justice to them and to our country—to our free government.

3. We must educate, or lose our best young men—the enterprising, the rich and influential.

4. The *Church* must do this for itself. It is mostly to the advantage of the poor. The rich can and do go elsewhere. They profit less than the poor by education. These

rise to power, influence, and position—are now the teachers, editors, authors, ministers. This is God's plan.

5. The Church alone can make and keep a Methodist college. If a few make, they will fashion it. It should be instinct with the spirit of the people. It must be theirs, just as the churches are and the ministry. It will then have their prayers.

XXIII.

ON PRAYER.

I will, therefore, that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.—1 Tim., ii., 8.

In the context, the apostle enjoins special prayer "for all that are in authority," and adverts to the connection between such prayer and the peace, piety, and honesty of the people. Pray for *them*, "that *we* may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty;" a duty by many Christians coldly performed, if not totally neglected. We censure, denounce, and revile our rulers—seldom pray for them.

We are exhorted, also, to pray "for all men," because "God will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth;" and because "Christ Jesus gave himself a ransom for all." Were it not so, prayer would not only be useless, but presumptuous.

This "ransom" paid by Christ—the atonement made on the cross for sin—is the only encouragement to pray, and the foundation for all rational expectation of obtaining the things for which we pray. Prayer, offered in the adorable name of Jesus, is, in the Gospel economy, the chief of Christian duties and privileges. Upon it God has been pleased to make dependent the entire success of our religious life—all the gifts of his grace. He is more willing to bestow than parents

to give good gifts to their children, but it is on "them who ask him." "Ask, and it shall be given; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you," are broad, free announcements of his designs and compassions. He gives the Spirit to those who ask him. Pardon of sin depends on prayer. "Pray God if perhaps the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee." Sanctification depends on prayer. "The very God of peace sanctify you holy; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." By prayer we escape the snares of the tempter. "Pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Faith, the great instrument of justification, and an essential element of success at the throne of grace, is sustained by prayer. "Lord, increase our faith." The success of our ministry depends on prayer. "Pray for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the Gospel." Other duties are occasional, and depend on exigence, or time, or place. Not so with this. "Praying always, with all prayer and supplication;" in the congregation of saints, in the family and social circle, in the closet, in the heart. "Be instant in prayer." "Pray without ceasing." "Pray every where."

Prayer is encouraged by the greatest promises. "Ask, and ye shall receive." "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven."

And this duty is performed, while others are neglected. The Church—the world is vocal with prayers. Millions pray at home. Nations are prostrate, at this hour, in the courts of the Lord. Millions agree in what they ask—the salvation of men, the piety, the peace of the Church. Parents pray for the conversion of children—wives for their husbands—sisters for brothers, &c. And these are, we know,

proper objects to seek. God wills to grant such petitions. Christ died to effect these objects.

But a wonderful discrepancy is here manifest; and the great question arises, With so much prayer, how is it there is so little success? Why is it? Do the promises fail? Has God forgotten to be gracious?

Far from it, brethren; the fault is in ourselves. We do not comply with the conditions of success in prayer. God prescribes the terms. These are enumerated in our text:

I. *A holy life*—"lifting up holy hands."

II. *A charitable, forgiving spirit*—"without wrath."

III. *Faith*—"without doubting."

I. A HOLY LIFE. Religion prescribes purity of life—obedience to God. "Cease to do evil—learn to do well." "Let the sinner forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts." These are preliminaries to acceptance. No progress can be made in religion without a compliance with its first principles. It would dishonor God to require, and ruin man to do less. Professors of religion often overlook—overleap all this. They so order matters that their religion and their lives stand at variance, or, at least, are quite distinct. The first runs along in its own channel: prayers — reading—profession—church-going—zeal, it may be—devotion—all earnestness and fidelity. The life is conducted on common maxims, and the man in his shop or on "'change" differs widely from him of the closet. He is exacting, unscrupulous—follows all prudent maxims—will be rich, or honored, or something else. He is at once pious and worldly. These men carry the spirit of their business to the closet, but not the spirit of devotion to their business. Prayer would sanctify their pursuits—worldliness chills their prayers. They put asunder what God has joined, and lift up *unholy* hands before the throne of grace.

We should *live* and pray for the same thing. We pray against the world, but live for it. We pray against pride

and ambition, but nurture them all the day long; against appetite, but pamper it; against temptation, but brave it. This is, in fact, an insult upon God, and acting as if we verily thought we could impose upon Him.

Many pray *for*, and live *against* their salvation. They call on God to sanctify, and then do whatever comes in their way to defile the Spirit's temple.

Parents pray, and beg ministers to pray, for the conversion of their children—weep, sigh, but do not restrain or train—leave all to God.

Christians choose for themselves and their children alliances in reference to worldly ends, and pray against the inevitable consequences of their choice. In doubtful questions, they decide on the side of indulgence, relying on grace.

We should observe what effect our ways have on our prayers. The closet is often the true test of actions. It is a kind of judgment-seat, where portion after portion of our history is tried, in anticipation of the final day.

But if we would pray acceptably, it is indispensable that we cultivate,

II. A CHARITABLE, FORGIVING SPIRIT. Christians who are really in earnest soon conform their habits to God's word, and pass on to the inner warfare with sinful appetites and tendencies, which constitutes their probation. Their great work is hidden from men, but seen of God. Forgiveness is an express condition of acceptable prayer. We must forgive ALL, no matter how difficult the duty. God forbids us to pray on other terms. Bad tempers are the chief hinderances of prayer. Men of faultless lives, so far as attention to external duties is concerned, are often passionate, peevish, impatient. They grieve the Spirit. They are censorious, uncharitable. Many become the scourge and curse of the circle where they move, and mar human happiness more than the robber upon the highway. Their spirit is bitter. They see the worst of all actions and words. They go to

God with this spirit, and, though rebuked nowhere else, get their rebuke then. He sends them away empty. All strong excitements—all party strife—all wrath—suspicion—denunciation, shut the soul from the throne of grace. The reforms—the moral, social, and political agitations of the day, are full of evil. Good men, convinced themselves, grow impatient, angry, denunciatory toward their brethren. The party, the Church is roused, and then God's Spirit is grieved, and the spirit of prayer lost.

Religious controversies, though sometimes unavoidable, are always evil, chiefly because they provoke a spirit antagonistic to charity. None but men of deep piety should meddle with them. They ought to fast and pray for a subdued spirit—for love, patience, meekness, charity. They should choose the softest words—avoid personalities—sectârianism—selfishness. And the whole Church should pray not to be led into temptation. After all, in controversies of this nature, it is hardly possible to avoid doing harm. It is an unspeakable evil to awaken uncharitable, bitter feelings in the Christian community. Bad every way, socially, morally, politically, it is most fearful in that it chills devotion and stays God's mercies. Preaching becomes vain, or nearly so. The prayer-meeting is comfortless. Men come out of their closets hanging their heads—their hearts heavy. No fire consumes the sacrifice. The Church would be a great loser, even should she promote orthodoxy at the expense of charity.

III. Faith. I shall dwell little upon this condition of successful prayer, not because it is unimportant, but because it is not difficult when the other terms are satisfied. The struggle so often had in trying to overcome doubt and to believe, more commonly arises from our unfaithfulness—from our attempt to overleap a barrier, which waits to be removed, rather than from any distrust of God's mercy or promises. The man who has used diligence to conform his life and heart to the will of Christ, comes up to the throne of grace

boldly—none more conscious of demerit, and shortcomings, and dependence on grace, and yet none so well prepared to cast his helpless soul on God. Conscious of having done nothing to merit the divine favor, he yet has the feeling of one who has tried to obey—who has respected the conditions—who has done what he could. He has acknowledged God's right to govern. He has "held forth the word of life." He has traveled up to the cross in the prescribed pathway. He is found where God bids him be found, and he is able to trust the Lord, whom he has acknowledged—feared—obeyed —loved. He is in a position to plead the promises—to look to the "Lamb of God;" now that he is at the end of his own resources, he may cast himself on the Helper. He can not doubt the faithfulness of him whom he has already trusted so far as to submit all to his will. His prayers will surely be answered. He may ask for health, or prosperity, or joy, without direct success, because, through ignorance, he may ask amiss. These may not be the blessings he most needs. But for pardon, and grace, and strength, and light, and life, he can not ask in vain. These God always delights to bestow on all who rightly seek them. All blessings upon the Church and on men's souls he is ready to bestow in answer to prayer, if their sins do not stay his liberality.

I will add, that it is of the very essence of faith that we rightly apprehend the true import of prayer. It is not a mere exercise by which we are disciplined and grow more pious—a routine through which, if we proceed seriously and earnestly, all is done. It is an application to God, in virtue of Christ's merits, by which we obtain what would be withholden if we did not pray. As such, we must regard it more as a means—an instrument, than as a duty. We should consider our wants, and then, "by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let them be known unto God," who is ready to do for us "more than we can ask or think." In prayer, as in all God's dealings with us, does it hold true,

"according to thy faith be it unto thee." Ask for great things, "nothing doubting," and great things will be yours. God is most honored when we expect the greatest gifts. Christ is magnified when, in the contemplation and the pleading of his infinite merits, we quite forget our own unworthiness, and confidently look for the divinest bounty. We are more likely, therefore, to obtain great things than small, when God is the giver and Christ our plea. Covet the best gifts. Cherish large views and generous hopes. Jesus is yours, and all things in heaven and on earth are his. Is it incredible that he who put away sin by one offering of himself on the cross, should willingly forgive your sins? that he, who gave his blood to purge away iniquity, should wash out all the stains of his children? Call upon his name for gifts worthy of a great King to bestow. Oh, we are mean in our views—"we have not because we ask not," or "because we ask amiss." We are not straitened in Jesus, but in our own bowels. Put forth great prayers. Indulge in noble, cheering anticipations. Remember it is to God's storehouse you are come—that Christ's infinite merits are your plea and ground of acceptance. "Lift up holy hands without wrath and doubting."

XXIV.

THE DANGER OF DEFERRING THE WORK OF OUR SALVATION.

Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.—Acts, xxiv., 25.

This text announces the result of an interview, or, more properly, perhaps, of several interviews, between the Roman governor of Judea and the apostle Paul. It exhibits at once the power of the Gospel over the human mind, and its in-

ability to overcome the opposition of a heart resolved not to submit to its authority. Here was a heathen ruler, who exercised absolute dominion over millions, including crowned heads among his subjects. His education, which was no doubt such as the Roman nobility usually received, elaborate and extensive, was as unfavorable as possible to the claims of the Gospel, and tended rather to a general skepticism than to a firm belief in any form of religion, true or false. That he was an unrighteous governor, and a bad, time-serving man, his conduct in this transaction, independently of any other parts of his history, sufficiently demonstrates. On the other hand, the advocate of the Gospel appeared under the greatest disadvantages. He was endowed with unquestionable ability, but he was covered with reproach and dishonor. He was a prisoner awaiting his trial for alleged crime, and dependent not only for justice, but for liberty and life, on the tyrant before whom he "reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." Under these circumstances, he was divested of all means of influence besides the divinity of his theme and of his mission; but these were enough. "Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."

1. Here we have a convinced sinner feeling and acknowledging his obligations, and deliberately resolving not to do his duty. He represents the whole class of impenitent sinners. He is the type of all irreligious men living under the good influences of the ministrations of the Gospel. I but repeat a declaration which most men acknowledge, and all feel to be true, when I say that impenitent sinners believe the Gospel to be God's only way of saving the human race. This conviction is derived from education—from attendance on the means of grace—from reading the Scriptures and religious books—from an unavoidable participation in the moral sentiments of the community in which we live—from the general influences of the Holy Spirit, in virtue of which every

individual has so much light and life imparted to him as may be needful to an incipient movement toward a Christian faith and a holy life.

2. And this conviction of the truth and excellence of the Gospel is accompanied by a universal conviction that it is our bounden duty to embrace it. Irreligious men seldom hesitate to admit that it is God's will they should be Christians, and that they are under the most sacred obligations to become such. They freely confess that their own consciences and understandings concur with the warnings of the pulpit on this point, and that they persevere in irreligion, not for the want of these inward monitions, but in spite of them. In this daring and dangerous attitude, in this state of positive and unnatural conflict with their moral constitution, do irreligious men, one and all, deliberately place themselves, and deliberately stand in the sight of heaven and earth.

3. Need I say to them that they occupy a false position? When in common life you say of an individual that he knows better than to act or speak as he does—that he violates his own conscience in the course he is pursuing; when you affirm of a public man that he does wrong, or speaks falsely *knowingly*—that he violates plain, acknowledged obligations —that he neglects *obvious*, *well-known* duties, it is agreed, on all hands, that you have brought against a fellow-being the gravest charges, and that, if these charges are made good, he is inevitably a dishonored, ruined man. Against imputations such as these, the calmest, most phlegmatic spirit wakes up to defend itself. It can not endure the reproach, and will sacrifice all things earthly to wipe it away. We can endure to have ignorance, or error, or sloth, or carelessness imputed to us, but not to have it said that we slight our own sense of right and wrong—that we willingly and consciously offend —that we give no heed to conscience and truth. So it is when our fellow-creatures are the parties to be affected by our delinquencies.

4. In matters of religion, where God and our crucified Savior are the parties, how is it? There is no longer any sense of shame or of self-degradation. The irreligious man is calm, and coolly pleads guilty when charged with sinning against God, and that in defiance of conscience—with flagrant ingratitude to Christ, who died for him, and with setting an example of unbelief and impiety, which, from the nature of his relations to other men, will probably bring upon several of them all the evils of eternal damnation. Here, unquestionably, is to be found a chief argument for the radical, thorough depravity of men. They are capable of neglecting their highest duties—of living from year to year in acknowledged conflict with their own consciences—of moving onward to hell with their eyes open, and of leading with them to that intolerable estate, and that without any relenting, a train of their fellow-creatures, and even their own sons and daughters. This is, by eminence, *the* sin of men. They know their duty, and will not do it. They see their danger, and will not avoid it. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." I have said already that the irreligious man is in a false position—that he wages war upon his own nature and happiness. What fact in the history of man is so dark and inexplicable as this, that a sensitive being, who through his entire lifetime flees from suffering as the chief of evils—a rational being, who toils for enjoyment as the chief good, will yet be satisfied with nothing less than trying the infinite agonies of the lost, and an utter forfeiture of the proffered crowns, and thrones, and spotless robes of heaven! Such a choice manifestly could not be made by a rational mind, outright and unconditionally. There must always be present the agency of some pernicious, misleading influence.

5. Irreligious men are only able to resist the urgent claims of the Gospel by resolving to obey them at some future time. "When I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." I

have shown how this spirit of procrastination is an offense against the reason and the well-being of man. Let us contemplate its aspects toward God. "Felix trembled." He felt the pressure of a present and urgent obligation. It is of the nature of these appeals of the word and Spirit of God, that they require immediate, unreserved obedience. They not only intimate God's will concerning us, that we should become pious, but they constitute and are the divine movement that has come upon us to make us so. It is Christ knocking at the door—the kingdom of heaven entering the soul—eternal light beginning to shine upon us, and to send into the moral system the pulses of a renovated, better, higher life. Now he who takes it upon him to postpone the consummation sought to be accomplished by the sending out of this divine mission, does not merely decline an overture. He shuts out a manifestation, and resists an impulse. He says of the Son of God, "I will not have this man to reign over me," and at the same time thrusts him out as a pretender and a usurper. He violently arrests God's administration. He deliberately thwarts the great plans and agencies of recovering grace. He does despite to the Holy Spirit, and tramples on the blood of Christ, and on the cross, from which it was poured out for his healing. The sinner must not dream that he can be passive, a mere neutral in such a crisis. He is, and needs must be, against Christ, so long as he is not decidedly and avowedly for him.

6. The thought of occupying such a position as I have defined, even for a moment—of incurring the unutterable peril and guilt of fighting against God, in a single onset, is intolerable to the soul of a rational being. It is to be remembered, however, that irreligious men spend their lives in this warfare. Like the builders of Nehemiah, they carry a sword in one hand, while they perform the common functions of life with the other. They wear their armor all the day long, and put themselves in array against the Highest incessantly.

The influences that would lead to piety operate with greater or less force from day to day, and from year to year. The convictions of duty dwell in the soul, and minister perpetual strength and light to the moral forces. Opposition to them must be ever active and vigilant. So the dreadful sin of resisting God takes the form, not of a paroxysm, but of a habit. It reproduces itself in each successive volition, and incurs anew its damning guilt as often as we do wrong, knowing how to do right.

7. I would not be understood to inculcate the erroneous sentiment that the struggle against sin continues through life to grow more and more violent. This is not the teaching of experience on this momentous subject. The guilt of an unrepenting sinner, we know very well, increases every day. "He treasures up wrath against the day of wrath." His enmity is unquestionably strengthened by every act of disobedience to God. He becomes, therefore, the more fixed in his bad position. Yet it by no means follows that the controversy rages with increasing fury. On the contrary, irreligious men devise a multitude of expedients to mitigate the inconveniences and soothe the exasperations that grow out of their relations to God. The hope—the purpose on which their procrastination is founded, can of itself minister alleviation. They will yet be converted, and so elude the greater evils with which the pulpit seeks to disturb them. This is the great soother of their fears. The pains and the appreciation of conscious guilt and actual danger are also greatly diminished by more transient devices. Sinners look away from their condition and danger, and stifle reflection by giving a broad welcome to the pleasures and pursuits of the world. They also continue to maintain themselves in their bad position, with some measure of self-respect and repose of mind, by nursing some doubts with regard to the magnitude or reality of the evils threatened, or to the reasonableness or obligation of a portion of the duties enjoined upon them.

They cherish objections to certain doctrines, or ministers, or usages, which happen to be specially obnoxious as the instruments or media through which divine truth is brought into troublesome proximity to their consciences. These objections are coined only to serve a purpose, and to shed a soothing influence over the period that must intervene between the present and the "convenient season," when they mean to call for God to come back again; but they frequently attach themselves permanently to the Gospel itself, and so lead the victim of delay to incurable skepticism.

8. It is but another step in the sinner's progress that leads him to feel that he is wronged and injured by being pressed and annoyed with topics which he has concluded to regard, for the present at least, and during the truce which he has made with hell, as unimportant, or unreasonable, or out of time. He becomes impatient and angry. His rights are intruded upon Why should he be disturbed about duties which he has deliberately assigned to "a convenient season?" Whose business but his own is this? If the minister and the Church continue faithful to his soul, which they seldom do under such discouragements, they become enemies, and are repelled by coldness, or reserve, or reviling, from approaching too familiarly the castle of one who, having bidden God away from him for a time, will not be molested till the convenient season come for calling Him back again.

II. "When I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." We have seen the results of procrastination. Let us attend to the reasoning upon which it is based. The sinner expects more facilities for beginning his religious course. What would constitute "a more convenient season," we may learn by inquiring what are the chief obstacles to his present conversion. These are, perhaps,

1. A distaste for religion. In spite of his principles and convictions, the unconverted man feels a strong repugnance to the terms of the Gospel. His heart "is not subject to the

law of God, neither indeed can be." Will the future be a convenient season in this respect? So far from it, his tastes become more and more corrupt.

2. Another obstacle to immediate conversion is the love of the world—its pleasures—associations—honors—wealth. Do these hinderances grow less by procrastination? They are often powerful upon the young, but they may be easily resisted. Acting chiefly upon the imagination, and fortified by no established habits, a little resolution is sufficient to break their charm; but upon men fully immersed in the pursuits of business and ambition, the world exerts an influence of the most fearful character. They seem spell-bound —infatuated—helpless.

3. Another hinderance to immediate conversion is a want of sensibility to religious truth, even when fully believed. Even awakened persons complain that they can not feel—can not realize their sin—ingratitude—danger. Now the direct and inevitable tendency of procrastination is to increase this stupidity. The heart grows harder—the conscience more blind and callous, by every act of resistance to duty and the Spirit. This is a well-known law of our moral nature.

4. Men, as they often allege, are kept from immediate repentance by the want of powerful divine influence upon their hearts. They wait for more mighty drawings of the Holy Spirit. Will the future be a more convenient season in this respect? Will God be conciliated by rebellion? Will the Spirit be given more abundantly to those—not those who pray for it, but to those who resist it? Are we not admonished of the danger of resisting—grieving—quenching the Spirit? The sinner, in the text, presumes upon his ability to be converted when he pleases. "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." And thus it is with all sinners who put off present repentance. They claim dominion over God, and they will make His purpose bend to their convenience. They insolently repel him

now, and will call for him when they want him—when convenient to themselves. Will God submit to their dictation? "Because I have called and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you: then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me."*

XXV.

THE ADAPTATION OF THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR.

The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them; and blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.—MATTHEW, xi., 5, 6.

1. THE miracles are mentioned which were not parts of the Gospel, but *proofs* of Christ's divine power, and consequently of the truth of his doctrine. Miracles are the *only* kind of proof applicable, if free agency is respected, and, therefore, the most probable and credible of any. They properly ceased with Christ and his apostles, and so showed, by their cessation as well as by their performance, His divinity. They were all benevolent, evincing infinite goodness as well as power, and so won men's hearts to the doctrines of the Savior.

2. "The poor have the Gospel preached to them." This is a *permanent* proof, and it is ranked with miracles. This care for the poor was divine. No other system was made for the masses, but for the learned—for the rich—for priests. The Father of all provides in the Gospel for all his family,

* Proverbs, i., 24–28

and cares especially for the greatest number, and the most needy.

3. It is implied that the Gospel is an antidote for the ills of the poor. This is seen in the fact that,

(1.) It prevents distressing poverty by the inculcation of industry—temperance—frugality.

(2.) It guards against fraud and oppression by its precepts, and the enactment of the great law of reciprocity, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."

(3.) It relieves poverty, by enjoining benevolence, charity, alms-giving; by visits of condolence, and sympathy, and practical kindness; by erecting and sustaining homes for the destitute, asylums, and hospitals. Let theorizing philanthropists try this method. Let them direct their efforts to the conversion of sinners, and thus will they lay the best and only foundation for progress. They will thus follow God's plan.

4. The Gospel blesses the common lot of life especially. Christ chose it as the most excellent way. He might as easily have been a monarch as a carpenter's son. All the inconveniences of common life become disciplinary—"work together for good" to Christians. They make the "weight of glory" greater. They form occasion for the cultivation and the exhibition of virtues that could not exist otherwise: patience—resignation—charity. These facts, if held in lively faith, would a thousand-fold counterbalance the evils of common life.

5. The Gospel is for the poor in its universality—in its freeness—in its conditions. Faith in Christ, which is alike easy to all, requires neither great knowledge, nor great intellect, nor religious education, nor righteousness. "Look unto me and be saved, all ye ends of the earth." "Behold the Lamb of God."

6. The Gospel speaks directly to the people, without inter-

mediary agencies. Its proper object and function bring it directly into contact with individual minds. It appeals to personal consciousness, and convictions of duty, and obligation. The whole travail and inward history of a soul, obeying, receiving, resisting, or rejecting the Gospel, is made up of matters with which preaching, and ordinances, and Church have nothing to do. It is a struggle between divine truth and fallen nature, vailed from human observation. Men feel that it is an address, an appeal by the Gospel, to themselves. External agencies may have been instrumental in exciting reflection, but they are needs forgotten in the sequel, and all the soul is conscious of are claims inwardly felt, and its own doubts, and thoughts, and fears, and purposes in regard to them. Every man feels this. He knows he is handling the things of eternity—of God, and laying the foundations of his future habitation. If he resists, he is conscious that he does a diabolical and suicidal work—that he works out his own damnation. Unless under some deep delusion, he can not be made to think that the preacher, or the Church, or rites, or creeds, can do any thing in the special business that is in hand. They have been vehicles for bringing God's truth to him, and no more. How he will treat it, what it shall do for him, himself must decide.

7. So of the divine agencies by which the careless are awakened, the penitent converted, and the believer sanctified. The Gospel brings them all home to the people—to the poor—to the individual. "God works in them." "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." His body becomes a "temple of the Holy Ghost." Not the clergy—not the Church specially—but individuals, are "led"—are "enlightened"—are "comforted" by the Spirit. All this great intercourse with the Almighty is to be carried on by the principal. He can not negotiate by embassadors—can not work through stewards and agents. Each individual stands apart from all others. God's Spirit is in him.

It has a distinct work to do in him. He has a separate destiny to settle. His own trembling heart has to say if it will war against God. "Choose you this day whom ye will serve." "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if *any man* hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to *him*, and will sup with *him*." God says to the individual, Behold, I am near you, "even in your heart." "Come, now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."* Thus does the Gospel make its distinct issue with each soul. Christ comes to each, and has his negotiations with him as truly as if all the universe beside were annihilated.

8. The Gospel adapts itself to the "poor"—to the common mind, in its manifestation of testimony. It puts its law in the mind, and writes it on the heart of its disciples. The witness of the Spirit is precisely of this kind of popular testimony, if I may so call it. God's Spirit bears witness with man's. God speaks directly. Inferences, books, good logic, the pastor's opinion, are all superseded, in this sort of proof, by a direct divine manifestation; and I can not see what less would do. It would be a sad thing to be left to uncertain deductions. The heart would sorrow and break, if it might not hear its absolution from God.

The other kind of proof, inferential and experimental, recognizes the same great principle. When we appeal to the fruits of the Spirit, "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," we appeal to the people—to their consciousness. Of whom shall I inquire if I have peace and joy? Of the pastor? the presbytery? the Church? Shall I ask my neighbor if I love God with all my heart? Whose testimony do I want to convince me that I believe—that Christ is in me the hope of glory?

In the progress of religion, each man is to "deny himself,

* Josh., xxiv., 15; Rev., iii., 20; Isaiah, i., 18.

and take up his own cross, and follow Christ;" and in the great day, every man shall be judged according to his works. "If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself; but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it."*

Inferences.

1. The Gospel is preached to the poor—to the masses. It is made for them—it suits them. Is it not for the rich—for the cultivated—the intellectual? Not as such. They must become as the poor—as little children—as fools. They must come down to the common platform. They must be saved just like so many plowmen or common day-laborers. They must feel themselves sinners—must repent—trust in Christ, like beggars—like publicans. Sometimes we hear men prate about "preaching that may do for common people, while it is good for nothing for the refined and the educated." This is a damning heresy. It is a ruinous delusion. All breathe the same air. All are of one blood. All die. There is precisely one Gospel for all; and that is the Gospel that the poor have preached to them. The poor are the favored ones. They are not called up. The great are called down. They may dress, and feed, and ride, and live in ways of their own choosing; but as to getting to heaven, there is only God's way—the way of the poor. They may fare sumptuously every day, but there is only one sort of Manna.

2. That *is* the Gospel which is effectually preached to the poor, and which converts the people. The result shows it. It has demonstration in its fruits. A great many things held and preached may be above the common mind—intricate—requiring logic and grasp of intellect to embrace them. They may be true—important, but they are not the Gospel—not its vital, central truths. Take them away, and the Gospel will remain. Add them, and you do not help the Gospel. That is preached to the poor. Common people can under-

* Prov., ix., 12.

stand it. This is a good test. All the rest is, at least, not essential.

3. There are hot controversies about the true Church. What constitutes it—what is essential to it—what vitiates it? These may be important questions, but there are more important ones. It may be that there can not be a Church without a bishop, or that there can. There can be none without a Gospel, and a Gospel for the poor. Does a Church preach the Gospel to the poor—preach it effectively? Does it convert and sanctify the people? Are its preaching, its forms, its doctrines adapted *specially* to these results? If not, we need not take the trouble of asking any more questions about it. It has missed the main matter. It does not do what Jesus did—what the apostles did. Is there a Church —a ministry—that converts, reforms, sanctifies the people? Do the poor really learn to love Christ? Do they live purely and die happy? I hope that Church conforms to the New Testament in its government and forms as far as may be. I trust it has nothing anti-Republican, or schismatic, or disorderly in its fundamental principles and policy. I wish its ministers may be men of the best training, and eloquent. I hope they worship in goodly temples, and all that; but I can not think or talk gravely about these matters on the Sabbath. They preach a saving Gospel to the poor, and that is enough. It is an apostolic Church. Christ is the corner-stone. The main thing is secured, thank God.

4. Our subject gives a test for all questions, doctrines, and usages. "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." Such was the language of the Savior, when he had declared the proofs of his Messiahship. Such is now the language of the Gospel, as it rests its claims on its genius and fruits. Men stumble at religion, by looking too high or too deep for it. They will not see its divinity in its adaptation to godlike ends—its care for the race—its condescension to our low estate. Its glory, its majesty, are moral and

spiritual. It cometh not with observation, but is mighty, through God, to convert the soul. It is preached to the poor. It is revealed unto babes. Its Manna falls on all the plain, about the tents of the people. One fountain only has been opened. That is for the poor. Yet it is free to all. "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters: buy wine and milk without money, and without price." "And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."*

XXVI.

THE LAW OF MUTUAL DEPENDENCE.

The whole body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.—EPH., iv., 16.

THIS text admonishes us of the manifold instruments and agencies on whose concurrence and harmonious action the prosperity and the perfection of the Christian Church depend. It likens the Church to that most complicated, admirable machine, the human body, which only produces its proper results, the preservation and comfort of human life, by the healthful tone and right performance of its various powers and functions. We live, and are at ease, in virtue of the sound condition and regular operation of all the multitude of parts and organs which compose our corporeal frame. Should the heart refuse to circulate the blood, and to diffuse through all the various channels of intercommunication with the members of the body its life-sustaining pulses, death ensues in a moment. A similar result follows the non-performance of their appropriate functions by the brain, the lungs, the stomach, and other digestive organs. Let but the delicate tie that connects the finger with this store-house of life, the

* Isaiah, lv., 1; Rev., xxii., 17.

brain, be severed, and it becomes paralyzed—dead to all the purposes of ministering to our wants and happiness. It were little that the eye should discern objects of utility or beauty at a distance, if the legs refused to bear us to them, or the hands to fashion them into forms adapted to our wants. It were useless that the ear should be open to notes of alarm or warning, if there were no strong arm to resist the danger—no fleetness of foot to escape it. The food which is conveyed to the mouth by the proper agent would only be so much poison, if the power to masticate or digest it were wanting or paralyzed.

The same law of mutual dependence reigns in improved, civilized society—in man, social as well as individual. The body politic and social must prosper, or its members suffer. The individual, too, can not suffer, without inflicting, by so much, an injury on the community. The ruler and the subject—the capitalist and the operative—the merchant—the farmer—the scholar and the artisan—the manufacturer and the sailor, perform functions alike indispensable to the great result aimed at or desired by all communities. They are mutually dependent—are indissolubly united in interest, by ties not always visible, but yet real and essential to the well-being of all parties. If the port of this great city were blocked up by an enemy, or closed by an embargo, the paralyzing effects would be felt, not only in every inland town and village in the land, but in the log cabins of Wisconsin and Arkansas. The derangement of the currency throws journeymen of all trades out of employment, and withdraws their children from school. An early frost in Louisiana, or a short wheat crop in Ohio, compels tens of thousands in England and France to eat brown bread, or no bread at all. A single man, deemed worthless, perhaps, by his fellows, is, in God's providential plan of dependencies and harmonies, the turning-point of immense benefactions to the world. The statesman, who devises a good law—the scientific man, who

discovers or applies a principle—the philanthropist, who leads on a reform, often changes the aspect of the times. Davy was, no doubt, thought a useless drone by thousands, who smiled to see a human being wasting his days in fantastic theories and idle experiments; but he invented the safety-lamp, by which millions have since been safely guided amid the deadly damps and gases of the mines. The same truth may be illustrated by the discoveries and inventions of Watt, Fulton, Arkwright, and others, who have become the benefactors of nations by the result of inquiries and experiments deemed by their early contemporaries frivolous or idle.

The leaders in great moral reforms illustrate the same principle. The first reformed drunkard, when he rose from the ditch and washed himself, and resolved to go forth on a mission of mercy to his fellow-outcasts, conceived an idea over the development of which Heaven and earth rejoice. What has he done? He has wiped tears from the eyes of half a million of women and children, who, through his agency, have bread enough, are clad in warmer garments, and sit around brighter fires during these wintery months.

I hasten to apply my subject to the Church, where the text finds illustration yet more pertinent and affecting. The Church is a community, organized, with special ends to be accomplished, and endowed with special capabilities and adaptations, yet having many points of resemblance to human society in general. The application of this analogy to the Church has been directly made by the apostle. "For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it, therefore, not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it, therefore, not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they

were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye can not say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor, again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more, those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary; and those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor, and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need; but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked, that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the Church —first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after that, miracles; then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?"* The justness of this reasoning, if it were not revelation also, is so very obvious, and the inferences so palpable, that I need not add a single word to this beautiful, powerful statement. All the members, and all the officers of the Church, are appointed and honored of God to be co-workers with himself—co-agents with the Holy Ghost in the edification of the body of Christ. The pastor, not less in the study, when he gathers things new and old from books holy and common, than in the pulpit, or in breaking the bread of the sacrament at the altar, or in the sick-chamber—all the subordinate lay ministries devoted to godly counsel, to faithful admonition, or to the management and conservation of the material interests of the Church—the pious mother nur-

* 1 Cor., xii., 14–30.

turing up her children in God's love—the sufferer on a bed of languishing, giving forth blessed examples of patience, and resignation, and faith—the teacher of the Sabbath-school—they who, in the Spirit, lift up our joyous songs of praise in the sanctuary—all who pray in the closet or in the congregation, are, and should be deemed, essential parts of that good, great system, through whose wondrous, harmonious working God is pleased to renew and sanctify souls, and train them up to be heirs of glory. Who, in this great co-partnership for honoring Christ, has any ground of complaint? the foot, that it is not the head? the eye, that it is too feeble to do the functions of the brawny arm? the ears, that they can not do the office of locomotion? Every part is indispensable. None can say which is most important in God's plan; and achievements, ascribed hastily to the eloquence of the preacher, often stand credited, in the record kept above, to the prayer of faith, offered up in the class-room or the closet.

Let us notice the *growth* intimated in the text. "The increase of the body unto the *edifying of itself*" has a noble exemplification in the history of our own Church. This *self-edification* is the special point to which I invite your attention. When Mr. Wesley began his career in England, and his early followers here, where was the great denomination of spiritual Christians which now fill the land? The simple-hearted men who came to our shores were like mariners who had escaped, naked, from a wreck. Without influence, unknown, with no appliances, all they had was their faith and their doctrine. Their inheritance, their embryo Church, was in the by-ways of the town, and in the interminable forest, among the sheep which were without a shepherd. This was the beginning. The cloud was not bigger than a man's hand. Their grain of mustard was verily the least of all seeds. Their love—their creed—their Church, were all comprised in one brief saying, "Salvation by faith." This saying, however, was divine, and it shook the land from end to end like an earth-

quake. The seed sown was as coals snatched from God's altar, and an inextinguishable fire blazed along every valley and mountain-side.

Here was the germ of the Church. These converted people, who first assembled in kitchens and barns, and, as they got more power, in school-houses and markets, soon leagued together and built churches. Guided by Providence, they organized classes, and provided for the perpetuation of the ordinances and the ministry. They began to institute schools for their children, and to provide funds for the aged and destitute. They felt the want of books free from the errors of a bad theology, and adapted to build up themselves and their children in the faith, and made provision for the supply of this want. Missionary from its origin and in its spirit, the fathers felt the duty of diffusing the Gospel, and they sent out their missionaries accordingly. I abstain from more particulars. Enough has been said to illustrate the notion of "self-edification." This Church has made itself what it is. It has enjoyed no state patronage. It inherited nothing from the past but God's truth, and now the little cloud covers the heavens—the mustard-seed is a great tree; it stretches out its long branches from the rivers to the ends of the earth.

What is the secret of our success? Next after the might of our foundation-truth, I rank the system. Every body has been enlisted. The body has been compacted by that which every joint supplieth. The working has been effectual in every part. The poorest congregations have built churches, because every one helped. Plain preaching has been irresistible, because it was true, and every body prayed. The heart of all the people has been in the movements of the Church, and it went on to conquest. I know many congregations and churches established by female operatives in factories; and I once heard a minister say these were the surest supporters in the world, because their hearts were in the thing, and all helped.

I am always filled with astonishment and exultation in thinking of our past history, and I never fear for the future except when I fear that we shall forget the teachings of our own history. We are now a great people, and have great duties. They come on us, not because we are unfortunate, but successful. We are more than a million. Our adherents are one fourth of the population of the United States. We owe it to God and man to do for all this multitude and their children all that so great a Church ought to do. We must beautify them with truth and holiness. We must provide for the old and the young. We must provide moral and intellectual training, and Christian literature. We are called on to survey the vast field which we occupy, and to do our duty. We want a large policy and liberal devisings. Once our only duty was to gain the victory. Now we have the additional one of keeping and cultivating our conquests.

To speak of nothing else, we have an army of youth to provide for. We are no bigots, but we wish our children to be Methodists—to worship God in the houses we have built —to go in and out before the altars where we have vowed. They are the hope of the Church, and its care. The whole Church is interested in the proper training of all its youth —the rich, that the sons of the poor are properly trained— the poor, no less for the rich. We want men fit to represent our doctrines, and show forth our piety in all departments of life—in the walks of business—on exchange—as teachers— as authors—as ministers—in the professions—on the bench —in the halls of legislation. We are freemen, and it is our right—we are Christ's disciples, and it is our duty. It is suicidal to leave all posts of influence—all agencies by which society is to be fashioned and guided, to be monopolized by others.

Above all, we are not at liberty, as Christians, to subject our sons to influences unfavorable to their piety.

XXVII.

LIVING TO CHRIST.

The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.—2 Cor., v., 14, 15.

In the verses immediately preceding the text, we have the reason and the rule of the apostles' ministry. They walked by faith, and were therefore confident, bold, undaunted, preferring the heavenly to the present state, seeking only to please God, in the full consciousness and recognition of the great fact that they were hastening to the judgment-seat of Christ. In view of this solemn accountability, they preached the Gospel: "Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." In stating these principles of action, the apostles seek not to commend themselves, but are anxious only that those to whom they ministered may have an answer for them who caviled and found fault—who gloried "in appearance, and not in heart." Thus actuated, and aiming to discharge their high duties under such fearful responsibilities, they may seem transported—"beside ourselves;" or, if "sober," it is an adaptation to human character and weakness. They obey the impulses of constraining love, "because, if one died for all, then were all dead," which forms the true Christian's rule of action. "The love of Christ constraineth us."

The text contains an epitome of several cardinal doctrines. As, for instance, that of *total depravity*, indicated in the words "all dead;" of *general atonement*—"one died for all;" of *obedience* founded upon and resulting from *love*—"the love of Christ constraineth," and "they which live

should not live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."

I. The universality of the atonement is here used as a datum to prove human depravity and helplessness. If one died for *all*, then were *all* dead—dead spiritually, morally. Of course, also, helpless—without remedy in themselves or elsewhere. In this condition,

1. Men could live only to themselves. With neither natural nor moral ability, they could not rise above this base, low, sensual condition.

2. They could not love God. In this state, indeed, men may perceive good reasons why they ought to love Him who hath created them, who preserves them, and to whom they are indebted for so many blessings. They may see motives for love to God in his wisdom, holiness, benevolence; but they can not love these of themselves. Let them try, and they feel the inability—that they are pressing against a barrier. Of course, also, while they remain in this state,

3. They can not live to God. They may perform right actions, but they are always done from mere selfish motives. That only which springs from love is acceptable and well-pleasing in His sight; but they do not love, and, until they do, they can not live to God.

II. Christ died to help men in these respects. Primarily, the sacrifice upon the cross was to save from wrath and future punishment. That, however, was not its chief object, which is to counterwork sin, and restore us to God's love and service. Sin is the great evil—greater than pain or punishment, else had penalties found no place in the system of God; nor would the race have been continued, seeing that, after all, there are "few that be saved." The supposition that the chief object of Christ's death was to save from punishment may be complimentary to us, not to the wisdom of God. He died,

1. That we should not live unto ourselves—to pleasure,

sensuality, pride, ambition. Self-renunciation is a first principle of the Gospel. It stands at the very threshold of "the kingdom." It is an indispensable preliminary to any successful movement. Christ died for us because we could not save ourselves; and we can begin the work of our salvation only by giving up self, and its helps and means. Self and Christ are antagonists. There is often a long struggle between them in the mind of the convicted sinner. They who begin without the sacrifice may work long, and hard, and even sincerely—may wrestle, and agonize, and weep, and wonder. The false principle spoils all. The entire giving up of self is the turning-point in conversion. So all through the Christian course. They "which live shall not henceforth live unto themselves." Christ is to rule in and reign over us; and we are to make no provision for the flesh—for self, gain, pride, ease, honor; nor to live merely with reference to shunning punishment, or to religious enjoyment, or to heaven, or "to ourselves" in any sense.

2. Of this innate selfishness *love* is the direct and only successful antagonist. Christ died to inspire us with this motive. The infinite value of his death—the unspeakable gift, conferred without our asking, when we were enemies, stupid, hateful, guilty—the death of the Offended—of Him who can gain nothing by our salvation—lose nothing by our punishment! Oh! it is this that subdues the heart—that awakens gratitude—that excites love, and naturally leads to the oblivion of self. It is the power of the cross. Thus actuated, we are enabled,

3. To live unto Christ directly—consciously—for his glory. His will, and interests, and wishes are to be consulted first and always. Will he have us holy? We seek holiness, because it is his will. Does he hate sin? We join him in that hatred. Does he long for the salvation of men—of the heathen, who sit in darkness? We sympathize in all these great interests; and, ever actuated by this principle, we ask, What

wilt thou have me to do? It is true, men may live religiously, and many do, on lower principles—to shun hell, or gain heaven—for the sake of maintaining a good conscience, or as a duty incumbent upon them—thus making subordinate and partial motives principal and paramount. We should rather obey the comprehensive motive. This includes all lower ends perfectly. "The love of Christ constraineth us." "He died for all, that they which live should live unto Him, who died for them, and rose again."

In conclusion, I remark:

We have here a universal and safe rule. Actuated by any other principle, we may be puzzled about minor questions of duty—how far we *may* go—how much we *must* do—how little will answer. We shall be prone to measure every thing by our safety, or duty, or fears, or feelings, and thus find ourselves, ere we are aware of it, on purely selfish grounds. Constraining love lifts us above difficulties and doubts. It has no dependence upon frames or particular states of the mind; it soars above self, and beautifully simplifies the whole business of religion. One stroke of the oar brings us away from the shallows into deep water, where our bark moves bravely on, favored by wind and tide. We find ourselves endued with preternatural power. We become one with Christ—part of a great movement, divine and irresistible.

XXVIII.

ACCEPTABLE WORSHIP.

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer.—PSALM xix., 14.

THIS is a suitable prayer for those who worship God.

How can sinful mortals worship God acceptably? is the most important of questions. This inquiry is worthy to take precedence of all others. The difficulties attending it arise from our ignorance—depravity—weakness—the dignity and holiness of God—the unspeakable importance of what we seek—pardon—divine favor—eternal life.

Prayer involves deeper questions than whether it shall be extemporaneous or formal. Great rhetorical excellence is of little worth. Yet words are important. "Let the words of my mouth be acceptable in thy sight." "By thy words shalt thou be justified." "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." Let your words be "to the use of edifying."

Our words should be simple—unostentatious—humble—penitent. They should be reverent—uttered with deep solemnity. Flippancy—smartness—levity—clamor, all wrong. All familiar addresses to God and Christ wrong. All endearing, carnal epithets also. All use of Scripture—all remarks about God's works should be reverent. Vapid, thoughtless responses pernicious.

After all these admonitions, which are not unimportant, the "words of the mouth" are likely to be right if "the meditation of the heart" is so, from which they derive their real

color and character. Worship is the language of the heart —right, if the heart is right—wrong, if the heart is wrong.

Our meditation of God should be profoundly reverent—adoring—of ourselves, humble, repentant, abasing. Of prayer itself we should think, not merely or chiefly as duty, but as privilege—as the means of obtaining blessings. We have done nothing, when we go through the form ever so seriously, if we get no answer. It is the channel of communication with God. We get by prayer, grace, pardon, and eternal life, if at all. Our meditation must take in their vital importance.

We must pray for proper objects, *expecting to receive.* Prayer is unmeaning without this. We should expect the best gifts, because they come from God. It is worthy of God to give them. It pleases and honors him, that we expect great things at *his* hands. He has promised, and we insult him by doubting. Our ill-desert has no part in the matter, and we must rise above its influence by

Faith. This is the victory of faith. The greater our guilt and ill-desert, the more gracious the pardon—the more glorious the mercy of God. We must "meditate" of him as a great King, of princely liberality—as claiming praise for clemency and forgiveness.

We should inculcate on our hearts lessons of lowliest humility. We are guilty—helpless—unprofitable—hell-deserving—unfit to speak to God—to *look* toward his throne. All this we must feel deeply—overwhelmingly, so as to make us dumb—prostrate in the dust—only stammering, "God be merciful to me a sinner." "Spare, for thy mercy's sake." "Show compassion, that thy name may be praised." And from this depth of despair must we rise to undoubting confidence—"come *boldly* to the throne of grace," "believing that we receive." This is the condition of success, and a hard condition it would be, but that "God is our strength." "Our meditation" must recognize him as such. Through

Him we can "do all things." We can pull down strong-holds —can bear temptations—can perfectly love him—can turn away from all sin—rise above all weakness—rejoice in all pain and loss. This is the secret, and the power of faith. It enlists Omnipotence on the side of our weakness. It brings Infinite Wisdom into our counsels.

Finally, our "meditation" must dwell on Him as "our Redeemer"—the propitiation for our sins—the Captain of our salvation—our Intercessor and Priest. In him we find pardon, and are as just persons before God. Through him our sincere, humble offerings are fit to be received of God. We have refuge in him and cleansing. The more distinctly we recognize Christ and his great atonement, the more powerful and "acceptable" will be our prayers.

XXIX.

GOOD WORKS NOT GROUNDS OF ACCEPTANCE, BUT MEASURES OF REWARD.

Rich in good works: ready to distribute, willing to communicate. Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.—1 TIM., vi., 18, 19.

THIS text inculcates the duty of engaging in good works habitually and on the most liberal scale, on the ground of their connection with future happiness. It thus involves the celebrated question about the value and efficacy of good works, on which so many books have been made, and so many controversies held—a question which, to this day, divides the Christian Church into parties, and stamps large denominations with their most distinguishing peculiarities.

The true scriptural doctrine will be reached by the two propositions:

Good works are not grounds of acceptance;

They are measures of reward.

The true and only ground of a sinner's reconciliation with God, and acceptance into the divine favor, is the atonement of Christ, and God's free, sovereign grace exercised on that account; and there is no point on which the divine honor is more jealous and uncompromising. "By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." "Not of works, lest any man should boast." The boon of the divine favor is too precious to be given in exchange for such performances as ours. Not by silver and gold—not by perishable goods, but "by the precious blood of Christ." "Ye are bought with a price."

As good works are not the grounds of our acceptance, neither are they agents or instruments in it, or preparations for it. Indeed, they have no religious character at all previous to our acceptance, which is solely by faith in Jesus Christ. Our entire character, our whole history, previous to that event, is sinful; and faith alone, by which we are justified, can redeem our best actions from the taint of our fallen nature. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

Our acceptance, then, has no connection with any good works—with any act or quality on our part but repentance and faith. It is God's free gift to the believer, made to him for Christ's sake alone. The sinner is likely to find a Savior—the troubled one peace, with a readiness and satisfaction proportioned to the deep conviction—to the clear apprehension he has on this point. He offends God and insults the Savior by the slightest thought that he presents some consideration for the boon sought in his good character or works.

Yet good works are, in the divine economy, and through grace, rewardable. The Bible is full of this doctrine, and we are not at liberty to overlook or slight it. We are accepted through Christ's merits alone, and, through the same mer-

itorious provision, the acts of obedience and charity which we perform are accepted also, and become the means not only of our growth in grace, but of enhancing our future happiness. Men are to be judged "according to their works." A cup of cold water given to a disciple in the name of a disciple shall not lose its reward. The alms-deeds of Cornelius the centurion came up before God as a memorial. I have said it is through Christ's merits alone that our good works are rewarded. They have no inherent merit. When we have done all, we are "unprofitable servants." Our Lord is under no obligation to thank us or reward us. We have only done what it was our duty to do. All this is true, yet God will do what he has promised, and we shall be rewarded according to these works. The glories of the future will be proportioned to the Christian virtues of the present. "He that sows sparingly will reap sparingly." Through God's infinite mercy by Christ, we are allowed to sow on earth for a future harvest. Whether the crown of our eternal rejoicing shall be bright or dim—shall glitter with many or few stars, depends on ourselves. We can lay up a "good foundation against the time to come," or neglect it. We can insure a rich inheritance, or we may defraud ourselves of countless treasures.

I can not help thinking that this scriptural doctrine ought to be more insisted upon. It by no means endangers the gracious character of the dispensation under which we live. It is itself an extension of it, since our best works can have no merit but through the infinite merit of Christ. We must not lose, through fear of imaginary danger, the benefit of one of the strongest incitements to duty, and one perpetually urged by the writers of the New Testament as well as by our Lord. In God's economy, all good actions are rewarded; they make heaven more joyful—they enrich eternity. Men thus "lay hold on eternal life." They "lay up treasure in heaven." They provide friends "to receive them into everlasting habitations."

The view here taken of good works tends to produce a deep impression of their importance in the divine economy.

God's own glory is promoted by them. "Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit." Christians are God's representatives in the world, and his honor is intrusted to their keeping. The intelligent universe forms, and must form, its opinions of the Creator from His works. Man, the noblest of them all, has betrayed his trust and dishonored his master. Should the universe form its notions of God from our sinful, selfish career, it would think lightly of his wisdom, and purity, and benevolence. God has a peculiar people, however, of whom he is not ashamed. They are lights—cities on the hill top; they bear His image, and they "are spectacles to men and angels." They represent God. They are Christ's agents and embassadors. He is never so honored as by those who do most good. The piety of the heart is not enough for this purpose. It can not be seen if it proceed not to good works. Here is the sphere and medium of manifestation. Men who "see our good works glorify God." The infidel must admit that this is religion, pure and undefiled, "to visit the widow and the fatherless in their affliction"—to clothe the naked, feed the hungry, teach the ignorant—train the rising generation to knowledge and holiness. God expects us to honor him in this way. We are false to his honor if we do not. The man who, "according to what he hath," does most, most honors God. He will have us "abound in this work of the Lord—rich in good works"—"bring forth much fruit." Every benevolent effort, every pious gift, *tells* here, and swells the tribute paid by the Church below to its ascended Head.

The importance of "good works" in God's scheme is farther seen in the fact that his plans are left dependent on our co-operation. He is a God of benevolence, and will have all wants redressed, and yet he has allowed the world to be full of misery. There is bread enough, and to spare, and

yet many are hungry. His commandment fills the chasm: "Feed the hungry." The sick lie helpless on their beds, and are ready to perish. God bids us visit them, and minister to them. Orphan children cry out at the corners of the streets. Christianity raises them up fathers and mothers. Childhood and youth come out from their Creator's hand with unformed minds and untutored hearts, ready to perish if left to themselves. These wants, if there were no revelation, would admonish us of our duty. The parent and the Church must write on these fair tablets lessons of wisdom and piety. Christ has died on the cross, and so purchased salvation for all men, yet nations die in their sins, ignorant of this benignant provision. The system is only complete when the Church does its part—"goes into all the world, and preaches the Gospel to every creature." So, in every department of life—in every enterprise of mercy or grace, there is an imperative demand for voluntary co-operation on the part of man. Nothing is complete without "good works." God honors his people by giving them this important relation to his administration of this world's affairs.

Finally, "good works" are disciplinary, and constitute the most effective means of religious improvement. It is characteristic of all "good works" that they demand sacrifices of some kind or degree. To visit the sick—to instruct the ignorant—to reform the vulgar and the vicious—to clothe and feed the destitute—to send out the Gospel, implies always some sacrifice of ease, feeling, taste, money, or something else dear to our self-love. Now this self-denial—this taking up of the cross, constitutes precisely the process by which, in God's scheme, and by the aid of his grace, we are to be purified from the dross of our baser nature, and strengthened in those virtues which are the elements and the glory of Christian character. It is essential to these high results that our "good works" should cost sacrifices of some sort, else they would not be disciplinary. As it is, our duty brings us into

perpetual voluntary conflicts with our natural propensities. We gain victory after victory over inbred foes. Habits of the opposite virtues thus become implanted and established. Thus we are trained for the skies. We give up successive portions of the earthly in order to insure the heavenly inheritance. We are deciding, in every such instance, against the present, in favor of the future—against the sensual, in favor of the spiritual—against appetite, in favor of duty—against self, in favor of God. So we are appointed "to grow in grace—to add to our faith virtue, &c.—to lay up treasure in heaven—to lay hold on eternal life."

I need not enumerate the "good works" by which we are called to glorify God and win heavenly rewards, after having disciplined ourselves on earth. They comprehend all the acts by which misery can be redressed, happiness increased, and souls saved. Yet, in improved communities, where the subdivisions of labor are numerous and well defined, they will usually take the forms of pecuniary bestowments. It may not be in my power to visit the sick-room, or teach the ignorant, or carry the Gospel to the heathen, yet my money can do all this, and more, and I do my duty by giving it with proper motives. Now this giving is, of all acts, perhaps the most disciplinary. It is the grand antagonist of selfishness and worldliness, and he who gives freely and frequently adopts the best and the only means which God has devised to restrain and subdue these chief foes of religion in the soul. He is drawing out the heart's blood of his worst enemy. He keeps up a perpetual cannonade upon the devil's strong-hold. He has found out that one way by which a "rich man can enter into the kingdom." I think there is no other but this, and that he who refuses to walk in this will be ruined.

It is in the love of money, rather than in the amount, that the evil and danger consist. The man of small income is no more likely to be exempt from this than the rich, and he needs the discipline. Hence God's demand is according to

the ability—as He hath prospered men—much where much, little where little is given. So, too, in God's account, the gift and the reward are measured by the spirit of the sacrifice.

This commercial age needs, and has, more of this discipline than others. We ought to be glad. It betokens God's favor. Now every one can lay up treasure—glorify God—grow holy. It betokens better days. We must expect this more and more. We must be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for ourselves a good foundation against the time to come, that we may lay hold on eternal life.

I shall now make a very brief application of the principles of this discourse to the special interest which has called it forth.

A number of ladies, members of this, and, I believe, of some other congregations in this city, formed an association some years since for the relief of destitute orphans. In the earlier stages of this enterprise, important aid was extended to a considerable number of beneficiaries, though I lack the statistical information which would enable me to give the results of these charitable efforts with any degree of precision. I learn that they have not attempted, and do not now propose, any imposing organization. Instead of erecting buildings and keeping up a corps of agents and officers, in imitation of the asylums in our large towns, they have placed their juvenile charge in well-ordered families, to be sent to school and trained to such employments as may be adapted to their circumstances and inclination. This feature in the management commends itself to especial approval, as by it the children are accustomed to the discipline, the restraints, and sympathies of the domestic circle—an arrangement for their nurture and education evidently intended by their Creator, and all the more likely on that account to operate beneficially upon their character and future prospects. It has the further recommendation of economy, with no drawback upon

these obvious advantages, except, perhaps, some loss of reputation from a mode of procedure so quiet and unostentatious.

For causes not well known to me, the operations of this highly praiseworthy association have for several years been a good deal contracted, and there is even some danger of the abandonment of the work, unless it shall receive more decided encouragement from the public. Such a result would, I think, be deplorable on many accounts. I can conceive of no better way of extending relief to these children of destitution and misfortune; and neither their number nor their wants have diminished, if we may trust to the reports of the funeral peals which so often fall upon our ears. With an increasing population, such demands upon our benevolence will inevitably increase from year to year, and it were a calamity that the provision to meet them should, meantime, become more inadequate.

Let it be borne in mind that the wants of orphans are always *real* and *urgent*. You may often be imposed upon, use what circumspection you can, in relieving common beggars. Ordinary charities may encourage idleness, or intemperance, or extravagance; nor can any vigilance, or precaution, or any inquiries, adequately protect against imposition. In that line of beneficence which now commends itself to your favor, there are no such liabilities to be encountered. A *destitute orphan*. His poverty is never the effect of his own misconduct. It is his by inheritance. It has pleased God that he should be poor and bereaved. Heaven itself puts into his mouth the touching appeal which his silent, and often unconscious wretchedness incessantly presents to our compassion and our piety. This is a case which admits of the last degree of simplification. The orphan must be looked after and provided for by somebody, or his ruin is inevitable. Father and mother, his natural providers and guardians, are removed from the world. If they died in the faith, they rested on the promise, and "left their fatherless

children unto God." But how does God provide for such a case? He does not shower down manna to supply such wants. He does not send ravens to bear meat to hungry babes. He consigns them to the tender mercies of His people. These are, by eminence, "*the poor*," who shall always be with you; the "little ones," whom it is so dangerous to offend—to neglect whom is to neglect Christ—to feed, and clothe, and comfort whom is to minister to Jesus. A better condition of society, more skill, and more virtue, may, and we trust will, remove many of the evils of life. They will, at least, greatly diminish the number and the sufferings of the poor. But, till "death is swallowed up in victory," and time shall be no more, the wail of orphans shall be heard in all this wide world. There will be bereaved infants and children, who will faint and perish if charity does not foster them—who, if they live, will grow up to ignorance, and vulgarity, and vice, and even crime, if charity does not guide and watch over them. As yet they are uncorrupted, and offer you innocence, and ductility, and a plastic soul, to be molded by pains-taking benevolence into the beautiful forms of virtue, intelligence, and religion. Wait a while, and ignorance, and vice, and loathsome depravity will have anticipated you, and impressed upon the neglected immortal their own likeness. Then penal statutes, jails, and the world's scorn will be their schoolmaster.

I must add, in conclusion, what I profoundly feel, that it will be a shame, and hardly less than a crime, if, in such a community as this, or such a state of society as New England presents, where there is so little poverty and so high a scale of average comfort, such an enterprise shall flag for want of patronage. It falls in precisely with our educational theories; for to provide for orphans is to educate them. Moreover, we have not more of poverty among us than is needed for Christian discipline. It is different in foreign countries, where industry and wealth absolutely groan under the bur-

dens imposed by charity. It is worth observing how small a proportion of the appeals to our liberality are made in behalf of the poor. It has probably grown out of the very fortunate condition of the great mass of our people, and their very general exemption from physical wants, that we are accustomed to give for the promotion of education, for the diffusion of Bibles, for the propagation of the Gospel, or kindred enterprises, but with comparative infrequency for the relief of distresses produced by poverty and its accompaniments. It may be doubted whether ten per cent. upon the contributions of our New England churches goes to this species of charity. This should, indeed, be considered a matter for congratulation, and it should, above all, admonish us that we are under *peculiar* obligations, exempted as we are from the burden of a vast pauper population, to outstrip all other Christians in the liberal scale of our efforts to extend the Redeemer's kingdom. Still, it remains true that charity to the poor, to the widow, the fatherless, is the favorite charity of the Bible. A thousand times more is said of it, both in the Old and the New Testament, than of any or all other modes of fulfilling this Christian obligation. It is thus commended to our special attention. It should give to a pious heart *peculiar* satisfaction to labor in obedience to a vocation so plain, so emphatic, so reiterated. I have known even some Christians express a doubt as to their obligation to send out missionaries, but an infidel or a heathen might excite our surprise by hesitating to concur in an enterprise like this. We *know*, for all revelation and all the impulses of our common humanity announce, that it is a high duty to provide for the well-being of helpless children who are bereaved of their natural protectors and providers.

XXX.

THE UNPROFITABLE SERVANT.

Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.—MATTH., XXV., 30.

THE Scriptures contain many general denunciations of punishment against transgressors, and many special threatenings against particular and aggravated offenses. "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God."* "Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity."† "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men."‡ "The fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone."§ "Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."‖ It was to be expected that God, in providing for the purity of his Church, and for the discouragement of gross and corrupting vices, would stigmatize with some special mark of his abhorrence those offenses which possess the two-fold character of sin and crime—of being hateful to God and pernicious to society. It is perfectly natural, too, and it was no doubt the design of infinite wisdom, that these fearful denunciations of wrath should impress us with a deep sense of the guilt and danger of all transgression. Indeed, no lesson is more plainly taught in the Bible than that the immoral and profane

* Psalm ix., 17. † Luke, xiii., 27. ‡ Rom., i., 18.
§ Rev., xxi., 8. ‖ 1 Cor., vi., 9, 10.

are peculiarly odious in the sight of God, and that their punishment will be one of distinguished and terrible severity. The first step toward true piety implies a sincere and universal reformation, and the sinner only learns to do well when he has ceased to do evil.

The denunciations of the Bible and its threatened penalties are not confined, however, to actual and flagrant transgression. So far from it, in the more direct and full representations which it contains of the scenes of the judgment day, and of the principles which are to govern its decisions, reference is seldom made to actual transgressions, but only to the want of pious deeds, and the lack of those moral qualifications which are the proper objects of divine favor. This view is clearly exhibited in the chapter from which the text is taken, which is, in some respects, the most interesting and instructive portion of the Sacred Volume. The whole chapter is employed in developing the principles of eternal justice which will control the decisions of this great and last day. In the parable which opens the chapter, the five foolish virgins are excluded from the marriage for no positive offense, but only for having neglected to take oil in their vessels. In the parable of the talents, the unprofitable servant is pronounced wicked and slothful, and doomed to darkness, weeping, and gnashing of teeth, on no other charge than that he had not strenuously employed the means intrusted to him. And in the more direct and awful description of the judgment which concludes the chapter, the accursed of God depart into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels, upon no charge of positive wickedness, but only upon the mere deficiencies of their character. They had not testified their devotion to Christ by acts of piety and mercy.

The Gospel teaches us that, while the Lord will not fail to punish transgressors according to their works, sinners are to be condemned for their want of piety, and for the good which they have omitted to do, no less than for the evil they have

done. It will be a source of condemnation, at that day, if we have been negligent — slothful — unprofitable. The *ground* and *extent* of our accountability to God are clearly indicated in the account given of the reckoning with the unprofitable servant. The parable is too plain in its application to need explanation.

1. *The Ground of our Accountability.* The servant and the talent belonged to the Lord. "We are not our own," but absolutely God's—our persons—influence—all our capacities for enjoyment and usefulness. Especially our intellectual and moral powers, with all their capabilities of knowing—admiring—loving God—of honoring Him in the world by virtuous and pious actions, and promoting the piety and happiness of men, are His—his by creation—by ownership. These are intrusted to us for a season, to use them as we will, which constitutes our probation. We should not be moral agents without liberty to abuse as well as use them. Men forget that God is the rightful proprietor, because they are thus free. They buy, sell, choose their profession, their associates, their virtues and vices, and feel that all is theirs, and often even say in their hearts, "There is no God."

2. *The Extent of our Accountability.* "He gave to every man according to his several ability."

Strictly speaking, the *extent* of each man's obligation is measured by the amount of the gift, or, rather, loan. Yet he who gained five talents and he who gained two did equally well. Both entered into the joy of their Lord. The gift was according to their several ability, and the ability is, therefore, a measure of the obligation.

Every man is accountable according to his ability, and not beyond it. He must devote his talents, whether few or many, wholly to God, and he need do no more. He will not be condemned for his original or unavoidable sinfulness or infirmity, for his weak understanding, or for his vicious training.

He is bound fully to devote himself and all his capabilities

to God, from the earliest period of accountability, throughout his whole life. The same is true of his *opportunities* to remedy his imperfections, whether of early training, knowledge, or habits. He is accountable for the diligent use of all the aids within his reach, divine or human—the operations of the Spirit—the Bible—the means of grace. These are a part of his ability—"talents" given to him. He is now under the same obligation to do all that can be done by these helps, that he was before to do what he could without them.

But I remark farther:

3. God requires us not only to make *all possible* improvements in our means of piety and usefulness, but also to devote these improvements, no less than our original talents, to him. Every thing connected with man and with piety is progressive. At first we are children—babes in religion. Means are provided by which we may "grow in grace"—attain to manhood—become strong in the Lord. New attainments are new talents. We must make and consecrate them. This is to be done in a good conscience—in faith, humility, prayer, religious influence, knowledge, and even in wealth. God will have his own with usury. The unprofitable servant was lost for lack, not of the principal, but of the increase.

Still farther:

4. God holds us accountable for talents which we never possessed, but which we might have acquired by proper diligence, no less than for the neglect or abuse of those which he originally conferred upon us. The unprofitable servant gave him back his own, but He demanded the usury, and, for want of it, thrust him into darkness. If a man, who owes his all to God from childhood, begins, late in life, to be religious, or makes small progress, he becomes unable to accomplish much, and yet is accountable for *all* that, by the utmost diligence, could have been done. Of two persons of equal capacities and opportunities, one becomes early pious, and devotes his whole life to God. The other neglects relig-

ion, resists the Spirit, sears his conscience, and spends his life, lost to all sense of religious things. It is true of the first, at every period of his life, that he performs no more than his duty. He would be guilty in the sight of God if he did less. He may say, in the language dictated by Christ to his disciples, "I am an unprofitable servant." "I have done that which it was my duty to do." Let us suppose that man had neglected some part of his duty—had failed to improve some talent, or had improved it partially—had shrunk from some field of action which he should have occupied. He is responsible for all that he ought to have done. Is God dishonored—is the Church injured—are souls lost through his neglect? The guilt is upon him. He is answerable for all evil, direct and indirect, thence resulting. He is now disqualified, perhaps, for great usefulness, by former unfaithfulness. He is yet bound for all that he might have done, had he never made a single false step.

The other individual whom we have supposed, with equal advantages, to have led a sinful life, is, at every point in his career, bound to the same duties as the Christian. He is a defaulter by the whole amount of his neglected duties. He has lost all sense of guilt. His conscience is silent. He knows not remorse. He is, perhaps, an infidel. Still, God's law abates not a jot of its stern claims. It has demands upon him not only for immediate penitence and reformation, but holds him bound for all past deficiencies—for neglected prayers, and penitence, and obedience, and holiness. All these are in God's book, and wait for the judgment. By every item of all the duties of a perfect life is he guilty, and heaping up wrath against the day of wrath. He heeds not the swelling catalogue. He only thinks, perhaps, of gross sins; yet in God's book the daily record is swelled and blackened, not only by all that he does which a Christian does not do, but by all that a Christian does which he neglects. Perhaps he should have become a minister; God holds him

responsible, then, for all the duties of that office—for all the souls lost for want of his services—for all consequences to the day of judgment. If this is not true, how did he get released from God's claims? By his sins alone? By which?

Sinners do not believe this, but act upon a secret persuasion that sin is less criminal in them than in Christians, and some cultivate a sort of skepticism—keep a few doubts—avoid a full acquaintance with duty, under a notion that they are less guilty—as if God could be deceived by trick and finesse.

The subject teaches:

1. The deplorable condition of impenitent sinners. Under the influence of sin they naturally become more and more insensible, blind, and careless; and yet their guilt and condemnation are daily becoming more intolerable. The weight of the curse is increasing with frightful and incalculable rapidity, and they are more and more heedless of danger. They sleep in the delusive and boding calm, which lasts only while the tempest of God's wrath gathers its blackness and fiery bolts. The Gospel, which they neglect or contemn, is yet working mightily in them as a savor of death unto death, and the divine justice only lingers, because its heightened claims shall be satisfied by a more terrible vindication.

2. Our subject presents to the young the strongest motives for an early consecration of their lives to God. They alone, who embrace religion in early life, can return to the Lord "his own with usury." "Others may be saved so as by fire;" but there are defects in their religious character and performances which no diligence or piety can supply. They have wasted, at least, a part of their Lord's money, and necessarily keep back "a part of the price." Their usefulness, their happiness in life, and the brightness of their heavenly crown, are irretrievably impaired by having spent a part of their lives in sin. The young alone have it in their power, through grace, to satisfy every claim, to restore to the Lord

his own with usury—to say to him at the day of reckoning, "Lord! thou deliveredst unto me five talents. Behold, I have gained, besides them, five talents more."

3. Finally, we see in this subject the imperative need of an atoning sacrifice. If men are responsible, not only for their sins and omissions, but also for talents which they have lost irrecoverably, and even for those which through neglect they never acquired—if the justice of God presses these claims upon all with a rigorous and inexorable exactness, as assuredly it will—what man—what Christian can stand before his judge? The Gospel makes provision for this exigency. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." "There is, therefore, no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made us free from the law of sin and death."*

XXXI.

REPENTANCE AND FAITH.

I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying, both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.—ACTS, xx., 20, 21.

REPENTANCE and faith are so fundamental that the apostle declares that in having preached them he has preached the whole Gospel; in the words of the text, that he had "kept back nothing that was profitable;" and in verse 27, he affirms that he has declared "all the counsel of God." He preached "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, publicly, and from house to house"—"to the Jews and also to the Greeks."

* Romans, viii., 1, 2.

Repentance and faith are still the burden of the preacher's message, the central ideas of the Gospel, on which all other parts of the system depend, and in which all are involved. They must often be repeated on this account, and because they are eminently the powerful dogmas, as well as because, unlike first principles of other branches of knowledge, their true import is often misunderstood.

Repentance and faith have been subjects of endless controversy. Their order is disputed. Repentance *precedes* faith. A measure of faith does, indeed, go before repentance; for "he who comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Still repentance precedes faith in the teachings of the Bible. "Repent ye, and believe the Gospel,"* was the opening of Christ's ministry. "Repentance and remission of sins" was to be preached to all nations, according to the Savior's last charge to his apostles.† Peter, on the day of Pentecost, in answer to those who asked, "What shall we do?" directed them to "repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." Repentance precedes faith, as is shown by John's ministry of repentance, which came before Christ's, and from the nature of these duties, since faith in Christ is the way of justification—the remedy for the moral disease, which men do not seek or desire till they feel that they are sinners.

Repentance must always include,

1. *Conviction for sin*—a persuasion that we are sinners—are in a false position—are wrong—in danger.

2. *Sorrow for sin.* This may differ in intensity, according to natural temperament: in some persons it is overwhelming, in others only moderate. Duration and depth are of no importance, so we are sick of sin. Many labor after keen anguish, as if it were an end, not a means. Some are speedily converted with little mental suffering—others

* Mark, i., 15. † Luke, xxiv., 47.

mourn long and bitterly in vain. The sorrow is sufficient and genuine when we are willing to forsake sin—to reform. Many sorrow much, but do not reach this point; others attain it speedily. The abandonment of sin, and *all* sin, is the end of repentance.

3. Repentance must be "*toward God.*" Men often grieve much for sin, on account of the evils it brings—sufferings to self or others—disgrace—losses. This is "the sorrow of the world." Reformation, too, may proceed on low, selfish, or worldly motives, and may be complete. But it is not evangelical if it has not God for its object. "Repentance toward God."

4. This repentance extends to *all sin*, and implies that we would not sin more because it offends God, even though it should lead to no personal inconvenience.

II. *Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.* The remedial provisions and agencies of the Gospel, through which sin is pardoned and the soul sanctified, are, in the divine economy, made available by faith in Christ. "The Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world"—"the Mediator of the new covenant"—"our Intercessor at the right hand of God."

As repentance, to be effective and evangelical, must look toward God, the offended Sovereign and Lawgiver, so all true faith has respect to Jesus Christ, who made satisfaction for sin upon the cross.

1. Faith, like repentance, is a theme of controversy. In the mind of many awakened persons it is a mystical term, which fills the soul with doubt and indecision. Men often look upon it with a sense of despondency and helplessness, doubtful whether it is an act for them or for God to perform. They pray in the same spirit—grope in bewildering twilight. None would repent or believe without the Spirit; but the supernatural influence only enlightens, strengthens, incites to the performance of these duties, which are at last strictly our own. All commands to repentance and faith suppose

this. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

2. This difficulty is increased by our use of language. We give the designation *unbelievers* to those who consciously believe every article of the creed—all the Bible. They will even plead guilty to the charge with no clear idea of the sense in which it may be true. Such language is not strictly accurate. It distinguishes heathen and Christians in the Bible, but not the unconverted and converted in our day. These commonly believe the same doctrines, and with equal assurance. What would become of the Christian should he reject all that he holds in common with the impenitent; the Bible—Christ—the atonement—heaven—hell? The impenitent are often the more orthodox and established, and may be perfectly sound in their theological creed. We meet them on this ground. We address them as believing all truth. God has taken care that they shall believe the truth. In most cases they can not help it. They can only become unbelievers by much painstaking—by foul play with their understanding and conscience. Education—attendance on worship—the Bible—current reading—unavoidable sympathy with prevailing religious opinions—the inworking Spirit, all tend to secure this.

We say to the sinner, "I know that thou believest." We do not ask him if he believes, but demand piety of him upon the ground that he does. No matter if he denies it—if he professes skepticism—Deism—Atheism. We have no other provision—no other message for him. We have only to leave him to sin and to hell, if our mission does not embrace him. We learn this from our commission—"Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; he that believeth not, shall be damned." Thus we are to preach "to Jews, and also to Greeks"—to all men.

3. This is our strong and only tenable ground. We must

believe it ourselves, and rest upon it in preaching. We *may* stop to deal with an infidel objection, or we may not; perhaps we had better not. We know from God's word—from Christ's commission, what is in the sinner's heart. We must proceed upon this—must honor it—must abide immovable by our foundation-truth—must believe God rather than man. After the sinner has proclaimed his unbelief—his infidel creed, we can only go on in the supposition that he is a deceiver, or is deceived, and must preach just as if he had made no objection—must cry out, at the end of his argument or his demonstration, as at the beginning, "Repent, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." Do we do indignity to man? to mind? to human nature? Do we lack respect? We must respect Christ. We have no other message. We can only preach on this supposition. We know only one Gospel. If that be hid—inapplicable—"it is hid to them that are lost."

I have described a case fearfully common, that of all, or nearly all, the unconverted who believe all of God's truth, and yet reject all of God's claims; who have arrived at the fullest conviction that the Gospel is the only way of salvation, and then coolly and contemptuously turn their back upon its rich provisions and urgent demands, as if it were a mere fable, or they had demonstrated that it was but a hoax or a cheat. I want words to express my sense of such daring impiety. It is, to my apprehension, the most startling and flagrant development of human depravity—contemptuous and provoking in its aspect toward God—reckless and ruinous in its aspects to the soul. God's Spirit brings and leaves the sinner precisely in this position. It can carry him no farther onward, for moral agency interposes, which Heaven will respect at all events. So far as truth, and faith, and Gospel agencies are concerned, the sinner is "near the kingdom of heaven"—within a step of conversion. So far as full purpose and depravity are concerned, he is far,

very far from Christ—on the verge of hell. He must decide the question of weal or woe.

4. Some may ask, "What lack I yet?" "How can I escape?" how make my Christian creed effective to Christian ends? Let us try to put the subject in its clearest light—to point out the one step to be taken—the solitary barrier to be scaled, in order that this man, so near the kingdom of heaven, may enter into it—that his ample, orthodox belief may become a lively, effective faith.

The distinction in question is well marked by St. James. "Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone."* It is defined yet more exactly by his illustration, "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace; be ye warmed and filled, notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?" One sees the distress, and, it may be, feels for, but gives no relief—says, "Go in peace; be ye fed, and be ye clothed," &c. The other sees, and feels, and gives. What is the difference?

The celebrated instance of Abraham offering up Isaac is used by James, as it had been by Paul, as an illustration. Paul asserts that Abraham was in this act justified by faith. James says, that "faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect." The statements harmonize. Faith was the principle—works the medium of manifestation. Abraham might have offered his son to Moloch, or to jealousy, like Constantine, or a Russian czar. The work without the faith—the motive would have been sin. His faith included the act—the purpose was the motive.

The subject may be illustrated by two inebriates: one feels all the evil, and drinks on; the other feels the evil, and reforms. What is the difference?

So the impenitent believer believes all, acknowledges all, and goes his way. The true believer, on the other hand,

* James, ii., 17.

casts himself on Christ. His faith ceases to be abstract, but attaches itself to acts, whereby it evinces obedience, until he walks by faith—lives by faith—eats, drinks, and does all things to the glory of God. Christ is all and in all.

XXXII.

CHRISTIAN ZEAL.

It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you.—GAL., iv., 18.

THE proposition contained in this text is so obviously and universally true as to have passed into a current maxim among men. Zeal is an indispensable condition of success in all human enterprises. To enter with coldness and irresolution upon any work of moment and difficulty, is to insure, at the outset, a tardy and joyless progress, and ultimate discomfiture. Nothing greatly useful to ourselves or the world —nothing truly and permanently honorable, can be achieved without that concurrence of single, unwavering purpose, and animated, urgent pursuit, which is here denominated zeal. Without this, the best natural talents and the most favorable circumstances will be insufficient to produce any valuable results, and this is no less true of humble and laborious employments than in the highest intellectual and moral undertakings. Whoever engages in a study, or business, or profession for which he neither feels, nor tries to feel, any strong predilection—upon which he will not or can not concentrate his attention and energies, labors in vain. He is destitute of the one qualification which alone can give unity and efficiency to the exertion of his powers of body and mind.

It is in accordance with the analogy of God's dispensations, that an attribute so essential to our success in the active pursuits of life should be recognized by the Gospel, and called

into lively and frequent exercise in the performance of Christian duties. This would be inferrible from the origin, objects, and agencies of the Gospel. And we find that religious zeal is repeatedly and earnestly enjoined in the Holy Scriptures, as indispensable to the perfection and success of our religious efforts. It is not so much a duty or Christian grace by itself, as it is an important element and needful accompaniment of all other Christian duties and graces. It may be said of zeal as of faith, that whatsoever is not imbued and sustained by its life-giving spirit is sin—that without it "it is impossible to please God." It is a part of "the first and great commandment, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."* Zeal belongs to every act of true worship; for "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."† "Fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."‡ Prayer without zeal is worthless. Hence we are commanded to be "instant (pressing) in prayer." Prayer is earnest. It is the fervent prayer of the righteous that "availeth much."§ "Above all things, have fervent charity among yourselves."‖ Zeal is inculcated in a more general way throughout the Bible; as, "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence," &c.¶ "Strive to enter in at the strait gate."** "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. I would thou wert cold or hot. Be zealous, therefore, and repent."††

Truly pious men have ever been distinguished by great religious zeal. David exclaims, "The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up."‡‡ "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord."§§ John the Baptist, from the fervor of his appeals, was called "the voice of one crying in the wilderness." Christ said it was his "meat and drink to do

* Matt., xxii., 37, 38. † John, iv., 24. ‡ Rom., xii., 11.
§ James, v., 16. ‖ 1 Pet., iv., 8. ¶ Matt., xvi., 12.
** Luke, xiii., 24. †† Rev., iii., 15–19. ‡‡ Ps. lxix., 9.
§§ Ps. lxxxiv., 2.

his Father's will." He prayed all night, and, being in an agony, he sweat, as it were, great drops of blood. Paul counted not his life dear unto himself—was ready not only to be bound, but even to die for Christ—served him with many tears—was constrained by his love.

Zeal made early Christians powerful. It gives efficacy to the labors of illiterate preachers—removes the obstacles, solves the difficulties of piety—lifts Christians above the world and the snares of Satan.

True religious zeal especially implies,

1. Unwavering steadfastness of purpose. A man can do nothing without resolution, yet men sometimes try to be religious without any settled purpose, to appease conscience.

2. Universal and hearty obedience to God's commands in all things—in small things as well as great: no other obedience is genuine, since it proceeds not from reverence for the lawgiver.

3. Supreme devotion of heart and life to Christ. "Ye are not your own. Ye are bought with a price." "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." "The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge that if one died for all, then were all dead, and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again." "He that loveth father or mother, son or daughter, more than me, is not worthy of me."* "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he can not be my disciple."† This is the condition of discipleship. Zeal which can not do all this is not Christian zeal. He who is not ready for any sacrifice, to go to any duty, to encounter any danger or suffering for Christ's sake, is none of His. Partial devotion is selfish, insufficient, and hardens the heart.

Zeal may be spurious or misdirected, as in the case of Je-

* Matt., x., 37. † Luke, xiv., 26.

hu—Saul of Tarsus—the Jews. The Bible delivers several cautions. The text has two. Zeal should be exercised, first, "*in a good thing*;" secondly, should be uniform "*always*."

1. "*In a good thing*." Individuals, and sometimes churches, are *zealous* in trifles, or even in mischief. There is a zeal of God, yet not according to knowledge.* This does not condemn high degrees of zeal, but its misdirection. The more we know of divine things, the more zealous shall we be. The Jews had zeal, not for the truth, but for their sect. Men are often zealous for sect, especially for peculiarities—for trifles which come to fill the mind. It is natural to be zealous in false notions of religion, and he who takes a notion, a ceremony, for Christianity, must swell it into monstrous dimensions in order to satisfy his own mind. The more trivial the notion, the greater need of zeal. True zeal seeks benevolent ends by lawful means—else it is fanaticism. It seeks practicable ends by wise means—else it is enthusiasm. "Zeal in a good thing" means zealous of good works. Zeal should be shown in active and useful devotion to the cause of religion, rather than in excitement and warm devotional exercise. In the first case, zeal will grow more and more efficient and operative upon the whole character and life; in the latter, it will speedily *burn out*, and leave the soul dry, exhausted, comfortless, and unfruitful.

2. Finally, zeal should be uniform, not periodical. It should not depend upon the fluctuations of feeling, but should act upon principle. Periodical fervors are deceitful, dangerous, injurious, dishonorable to religion. They are commonly a proof of superficial piety, or of none at all. "It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you."

* Rom., x., 2.

XXXIII.

ON GRIEVING THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.—EPH., iv., 30.

THE Holy Spirit convinces of sin, and regenerates and sanctifies the soul. It applies and makes available the provision made for man's salvation by the death of Christ. Its agency is indispensable, because men are "without strength" —are "dead in sins"—because they have neither inclination nor ability to become holy. It is also spirit acting upon spirit, the only conceivable instrument. It operates upon impenitent sinners by producing concern and alarm—by showing the vanity of earthly good. But it more especially convinces them of unbelief—of the sin of rejecting Christ. And when the Comforter is come, "he will reprove the world of sin, because they believe not on me."* "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil."† An enlightened conscience may convince of other sins, but moral men feel no guilt for unbelief. This, all but the most hardened sinners confess.

The Spirit regenerates and sanctifies believers—dwells in them. They live by the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit visits all men, and dwells in believers; yet it effects no valuable and permanent results, except with the consent and concurrence of the soul which it seeks to save. It "strives with men," but may be *resisted*, *grieved*, *vexed*, *quenched*, and *utterly expelled*. It is God's "*free* Spirit," and we too are equally free. We possess the perilous ability

* John, xvi., 9. † John, iii., 19.

to follow its drawings with humble and sincere obedience, or to repel them with stubborn opposition. Our treatment of the Holy Spirit, then, is a matter as important as the salvation of the soul. Let us consider briefly:

I. Our DUTY; and,

II. Our DANGER in reference to the operations of the Holy Spirit.

1. It is our duty to render to the Holy Spirit cheerful and universal obedience. This is shown by its dignity and objects, and by our utter dependence.

The Holy Spirit is our leader and guide. We must follow implicitly. It leads into all truth. It leads to duty by enlightening conscience—by vivid sensibility to our obligations—by special drawings and indications—by unusual seasons of feeling. We must obey with eager desire—promptly—must watch for leadings. The light thus becomes brighter. Otherwise, the light grows dim, the impression of duty indistinct and feeble, and is finally lost. We then look back, and suppose we were mistaken, but have, in fact, quenched the Spirit, and driven it away so far as that duty was concerned. Young converts often believe they should devote themselves wholly to God—in the ministry, perhaps—are unwilling—resist till the Spirit leaves them doubtful or blind. Such persons usually become mere formalists. They even fear to have more of the Spirit, lest this disagreeable conviction of duty may return.

2. The Spirit is the great Sanctifier. It conforms our sinful, polluted nature to the spotless image of God. It encounters our constitutional tendencies, and strives against our natural corruptions. In the language of Paul, the "flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh." In this controversy, which the Spirit is pleased to carry on in our behalf, our duty is manifest from the nature of the case, and from the context. We must work mightily with the Spirit, by watchfulness—desire—prayer—self-denial—good habits.

3. "The fruits of the Spirit are *love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.*" We must co-operate diligently in the production of these fruits, and struggle incessantly against every feeling and habit that is at variance with these graces.

Love, in the order of time, is the first-fruits of regeneration. We must love even *our enemies*—how much more our neighbors—our brethren—all Christians. This charity must embrace all within the sphere of our affections, though that may, perhaps, be narrow even in sincere Christians. The Spirit is quenched by hatred, wrath, unforgiving tempers, resentments, long-cherished dislikes, denunciations, uncharitable judgments. These must be resisted and destroyed, or the Spirit will forsake us. Prayer is our great weapon.

Joy. The Spirit is the Comforter. We must not prefer or seek other joys, to the neglect of this, which should be our chief joy.

Peace. "The works of the flesh are variance, emulation, strife," &c. The Spirit loves a calm, equable frame—a repose of soul.

Long-suffering. The Spirit is quenched by impatience, peevishness, &c.

Faith—in opposition to worldly-mindedness—love of money—applause—pleasure—influence. Faith is concerned for spiritual things.

Temperance. All excesses in sensual indulgence quench the Spirit. They strengthen the carnal nature—the deeds of the flesh.

All impurity in act, word, and deed, tends to extinguish the light of the sanctifying Spirit. A wandering eye—impure conversation—a thought—a vile song, may offend and expel the Spirit; for its intercourse and its controversies are with the heart.

Covetousness and love of the world are sinful, *because* they

quench the Spirit. This is a test of acts and sentiment—proofs that the Spirit is grieved or quenched.

II. OUR DANGER.

1. The way to heaven grows brighter as we advance. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." His light, his hope, and his joy constantly increase; but his road, at the same time, grows narrow. The Spirit shows him, from time to time, new evils to be shunned—new sacrifices to be made. His principles become more and more strict, his habits more uniform, his obedience more universal. Some things, which he did not, at first, think evil, he avoids, because they hurt his devotions; others, for they offend a brother; others, because they injure his usefulness. The man who has quenched the Spirit becomes more and more loose in his views. His light grows dim. He no longer has a quick sense of approaching evil. He gradually adopts evil habits, at which he would have shuddered at first. He shows this in his levity—worldliness—company—Sabbath-breaking. He looks upon his former strictness as over-scrupulous, and congratulates himself that he has become more enlightened.

2. He who walks in the Spirit feels the pressure of new and increasing obligations. As his vision grows clear, he sees new and deep fountains of inbred corruption, and new fields of usefulness without. As his strength improves, his labors multiply—he grows more prayerful—liberal. But those in whom the light is dim or extinct, neither see nor heed spiritual dangers. The list of duties to be performed grows more and more brief. They see little to do for God, or his cause, or themselves. Slight causes, trivial hinderances, keep them from church, or class, or the closet. Idle company, avoidable intrusion, any plausible pretext satisfies, and even gratifies them. The Bible—self-examination—devotional reading—holy converse—heavenly meditation, are neglected. They belong to a region of light and heat which they have left.

3. Religious sensibilities are blunted. The fire that warmed and melted has decayed or become extinct. A growing Christian may sometimes *manifest* less feeling, but it is because it has sunk deeper into his heart. Love to God and his cause are his ruling passion. He is intensely alive to religion. "Walking in the Spirit," he sees more of glory and mercy, till it becomes his meat and drink to do God's will. It is not so with him who has quenched the Spirit. His perceptions are blunted—his feelings benumbed —his heart hard and cold. He is no longer glad when they say unto him, "Let us go into the house of the Lord." The word of God is no longer "quick and powerful." Truths, that once filled his heart and his eyes, no longer move him. The blessed hope of heaven—the touching compassions of Christ —the joy of the Holy Ghost, do not affect him. He has quenched the Spirit—he has paralyzed the sense by which these glorious ideas reach the soul. Perhaps he congratulates himself that his piety has grown more sober and rational; or he takes for religious emotions the infrequent and periodical excitements which he experiences under some of the imposing circumstances of Christian worship.

4. How far any of us may have gone in resisting the Spirit, God alone knows. We know, however, that this sin may attain such an enormity that even the blood of Christ can provide no remedy for it; for "it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance."* "For if we sin willfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins."† It is not certain, perhaps it is not probable, that these fallen souls will put away all the forms of religion. After the Spirit of God had departed from King Saul, he still busied himself, in the midst of his iniquitous deeds, with offering

* Hebrews, vi., 4. † Ibid., x., 26.

sacrifices and seeking responses at the hands of the Lord. There is reason to fear that a deep delusion rests upon them to the end, and that they cling to their false hopes till they enter eternity.

This unspeakable curse, which the falling Christian brings upon himself, commonly by slow degrees, by refusing to co-operate with the Spirit, the impenitent sinner more frequently incurs by direct and obstinate resistance. He *drives away* serious impressions. When deeply affected at heart, he often seeks company, business, amusement, to relieve him. He knows what is the cause of his anxiety—his duty—his danger, but resolves to resist. He will not submit. He opposes stern resolution, and fell, unyielding purpose to the striving Spirit. In times of revival, of great light and strong impulses, we have reason to fear the soul's destiny may be fixed by one conflict. Many who resist great light and strong impressions seem never to feel again. There is ground to fear that the majority of men who pass middle age without conversion, have finally expelled the Spirit. In all other respects, their circumstances seem most favorable to their conversion. The hot passions and the visionary hopes of youth are passed away. The judgment is mature—the morals often correct. Why, then, are so few of them converted, but that the Spirit has left them?

I close with a few practical observations.

1. There is great encouragement in this doctrine of the Holy Ghost. He can do all things for us. He is *God* in us. The hardest heart, the most untoward nature, present no insuperable obstacles to Him. Let us lean upon the Holy Ghost. Let us fully believe and trust. Let us expect the greatest results from this agent.

2. Let us reverence the Holy Ghost within us. Let us fear to offend. Let us obey every intimation. Let us, at all hazards, follow this guide. Let us rather suffer or die than offend Him.

3. Let us seek for the fullness of the Spirit. It is the "Gift" which Christ promised when he had "led captivity captive." It is enough if we enjoy it, though all else were taken away.

4. Let us pray for the descent of the Holy Ghost. Above all, let us cry unto God, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from us."

XXXIV.

SECRET PRAYER.

But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.—MATT., vi., 6.

THIS is a precept of our blessed Savior, who had just declared that it was a proof of hypocrisy to make long prayers in public, "in the streets and in the synagogues." That is, to make prayers in public *only*. It is a duty to join in public devotion. We are forbidden to "forsake the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is," and great blessings are promised where "two or three agree as touching any thing" which they will ask of God. But many people love to pray "in the synagogue to be seen of men," who pray nowhere else. They delight in the display and the excitement of a prayer-meeting, but have no relish for the closet. These are hypocrites. Indeed, they do not pray at all, for the man who does not pray in "secret," prays not at all. This is prayer by eminence. All other kinds of prayer, without this, are but an empty sound—the poor expedients of a hypocrite to win applause or to quiet a guilty conscience.

I. "*When* thou prayest." Prayer, then, should have its appropriate season. A portion of time should be set apart for a work of such grave import. It must not be left to accident—to be done when we can do nothing else. We must retire from the world, from business, into our "closets"—to

our hearts. It is a duty which demands recollection, calmness, and honest, uninterrupted self-examination. Many Christians have no set time for prayer. They pray when they *feel* like it—when they are *drawn* to this duty. They think it formal—a kind of spiritual bondage—to obey *any* rule in their devotions. Many professors satisfy themselves with offering occasional ejaculations in the midst of employment or in company, and think that in this way they pray in secret. Others are content with kneeling down by their bedsides when they retire at night and when they rise in the morning. Why, if this is sufficient, did our Savior bid us "enter into the closet and shut the door?" Why all this particularity, this minuteness of detail? Does it mean nothing? Will He accept the fitful, convenient petitions of those who, through indolence, or irreverence, or haste, slight his commandments, and follow their own fancies? This, which to many will appear a very small matter, is often productive of very important effects; partly because the blessed Savior is more likely to meet and "reward" those who render an humble and simple obedience, and partly because persons who do not think prayer a work of such magnitude as to require the appropriation of special and regular seasons, will very soon cease to pray altogether. Or if they pray at all, it will no longer be "in spirit and in truth." The Father, who "seeth in secret," will see there no real devotion. A few vain repetitions, a few unmeaning confessions, a few "groans" which the heart never utters; the sad countenance, and the canonical attitude, are the wretched substitutes which we often present before God in the place of true spiritual worship. The "reward" of this disobedience, the fruit of "sowing to the flesh," will soon become manifest. While the humble disciple who follows the command of his Lord with a simple and childlike obedience, and night and morning "enters into his closet, shuts the door, and prays to the Father who seeth in secret," shall "grow in grace," be strengthened with "might in the inner man,"

and be thus enabled "to walk in newness of life." The careless professor, who is "wise above what is written," who is too spiritual to heed times and seasons, who only prays when feeling prompts, when sorrow oppresses, or when the voice of the multitude excites or lauds his devotion, becomes as "clouds without water," "trees whose fruit withereth, twice dead, plucked up by the roots."

How strange that guilty worms of the earth should attempt to prescribe the terms upon which they will receive grace and crowns of glory! How strange that Christians should ever fail to follow the example and precepts of their Law-giver with a universal and grateful submission! We are ignorant. We know not how to pray as we ought, nor what to pray for. We lift up our voice to the great Teacher to "teach us how to pray." He condescends to direct our erring footsteps. He bids us "enter into our closets, and when we have shut the door, to pray to the Father who seeth in secret." Brother, have you found out a more excellent way? What hour of devotion has left the holiest savor upon thy soul? When did you feel the adorable Redeemer most near and most precious? When was the world most effectually stripped of its meretricious charms? When did your faith most deeply realize the "unseen," and when did you go forth to your "warfare" as "a strong man armed?" Doubtless you found these blessings in the "closet." There seek them in all future time. It is Christ's audience chamber, and nowhere else can you come so near to the throne of grace.

II. Those who, in obedience to Christ's commandment, "enter into their closets," and cultivate habits of private devotion, comply with *one* condition of the Gospel. They do what all must do who will "grow in grace." But this is not the only condition of success in prayer. Many "have not, because they ask not." Many more, however, "ask and receive not, because they ask amiss." In this, as in other pursuits, there are many ways of doing wrong, and but one

of doing right. God, who has made secret prayer our duty, has also prescribed the terms upon which he will hear and answer it. Sincerity is necessary—so is humility—so is fervor; and yet persons by no means destitute of these qualifications derive neither comfort nor strength from private devotion. Some miss of their object through ignorance of their own situation and wants. They have not carefully examined their own hearts. They know not, or they do not feel, their own peculiar weakness or besetting sin. Their sense of imperfection and guilt is altogether general and indefinite. They have no "sin which is ever before them"—no weak point to guard—no pressing temptation with which they just now want strength to grapple. Their convictions, therefore, and their repentance, and their prayers, are only unimpressive generalities, which suit all times and occasions equally well.

In the absence of this intimate self-knowledge, which alone can furnish the details needful to earnest and profitable devotion, they are liable to many errors for want of distinct and affecting subjects for prayer. They sometimes labor after *excitement of feeling*, and this often passes for fervency of spirit. How many pray eagerly for a *blessing* without stopping to think whether it is more faith, or charity, or humility, or patience, or courage that they need? How apt are such persons to mistake the exhilaration of the animal spirits for heavenly communications? A calm and collected mind is highly favorable to devotion, and a thorough insight into the wickedness of the heart is better, in this state of probation, than the raptures of the "third heavens."

Our progress in religion and our final salvation afford continual and highly-interesting subjects for secret prayer. But Christianity is a system of expansive benevolence, and the closet soon becomes a cheerless and barren place for him who has no sympathies for the general cause of Christ. We can never pray as we ought for ourselves if we do not pray for others. The heart grows cold, and hard, and selfish.

The Gospel, by being contemplated only in a single and narrow aspect, ceases to be admired as a glorious plan for redeeming a world. It was for our own good, no less than for other reasons not so obvious, that Christ was pleased to make the success of his cause dependent upon the prayers of his disciples. The form which He taught his apostles is a faultless model for us in our devotions. The honor of the Divine "name," and the triumph of Christ's "kingdom," are made to take precedence of even the prayer for "forgiveness and daily bread."

It will be found that, in proportion as Christians are earnest in their supplications for others, their devotions will be profitable to their own souls. Our bosoms warm and expand in praying for our fellow-creatures. Faith grows strong while it pleads for the spread of Christ's kingdom before One who has promised to Him the "uttermost parts of the earth," and after contemplating the sufficiency of the atoning sacrifice to "take away the sin of the world," it is no longer difficult to believe that Christ is able and willing to save us. By praying habitually for the universal spread of the Gospel, we learn to admire its glorious character and objects. Our views become liberal and comprehensive. We are identified with the Redeemer's kingdom on earth in all its various interests. We share its "honor and dishonor." We become "heirs with Christ" even in this state of probation, and find it easy to enter into communion with Him, and to pour out our own wants before Him in proportion to our growing devotion to his cause. This is not vain speculation, but the voice of experience. The best and happiest Christians are those who pray and labor most for the conversion of sinners. Prayer for ourselves is never so acceptable as when accompanied with intercessions for others.

Are not the prayers of those who are theoretically orthodox often unavailing because they are not offered in humble reliance upon the great and sole Intercessor? Do we not

lose sight of the Mediator in some of our approaches to the throne of grace? I have often feared that we do, and yet we have no right to ask but in the name of Christ. God will not hear except for his sake, and surely we do not ask in his name unless we have at the time of our devotion a conscious and affecting sense of this dependence. This is, and must be felt to be our sole warrant for approaching unto God. The blood of Christ should be our plea, should fill our whole vision, should be the resting-place for our souls when we go to his habitation. We often condemn ourselves for wandering thoughts, while the most dangerous of all wanderings is little thought of.

We may not estimate our success in prayer by the peace, joy, or even ecstacies which accompany or follow it. Holiness and complete victory over the world are what we want. These are high attainments which are reached by faith, but commonly after many preliminary steps. There must be great searching of heart, and this will introduce us to scenes not calculated to impart immediate satisfaction.

Repentance is no pleasurable emotion, and yet this we seek in answer to prayer. The lusts of the flesh must be crucified, so must the deeds of the old man. The excision of the "right hand," the "plucking out of the right eye," are figures of speech that shadow forth no very easy processes. And yet the closet is to be especially the theatre of these sore contests with the carnal mind. A new discovery of hidden depravity, or a more bitter pang for sin, or thorough loathing of self and the righteousness of self, may effectually promote the main end of prayer, though they will hardly add to its pleasures. Even the greatest discouragements in prayer are often instruments of good. Who, when his mind *will wander*, and his heart *will not feel*, and his faith *can not* rise, has not struggled for an hour to set all these things right, and at length, in utter despair of success, thrown himself upon the bare merits of Christ?

III. There is a mystery in godliness. The path of our duty is commonly plain, and the means by which we are to "work out our salvation" are intelligible enough. But "God worketh in us to will and to do of his good pleasure." The Holy Spirit convinces us of sin, leads us into all truth, helps our infirmities, makes intercessions for us with groanings that can not be uttered, although the connection between the Divine agency and human efforts is mysterious and incomprehensible. All of those supernatural influences and aids which are concerned in our salvation are mysterious, and they depend essentially upon free and sovereign grace. They are not, however, uncertain or capricious. Without the Divine co-operation, our most strenuous endeavors would certainly be fruitless; but such is our condition under the Gospel, that sincere efforts are never unassisted, and the soul is never lost except through its own obstinacy and voluntary disobedience.

Thus it is, that in the unsearchable wisdom of God, a work which nothing less than Omnipotence is able to perform, can not be perfected until a frail and sinful man consents to engage in it. And thus it is that what is most mysterious, spiritual, and Divine in the experience and sanctification of a believer, is made to depend for its accomplishment upon what is most intelligible, practical, and easy in his own ordinary duties. No encouragement is offered to indolence or presumption, but no ground is left for despair. Vainglory, boasting, and self-confidence are excluded, while humble faith and obedience are secured. We are called out upon a field of incessant and strenuous action, where all the shame and ruin of a miscarriage are justly our own, and yet the strength with which we are girded, and the weapons which we wield, are so truly and exclusively spiritual, that our success, no less than its glorious reward, is of God. Such is the intimate and indissoluble connection between human and Divine agency in religion—between what we can do and what we can not do. Without the aids of the Holy Spirit, our

mightiest efforts are profitless; without mighty efforts on our part, the heavenly influences are withheld. This truth confessedly pervades the whole system of practical and experimental religion; but we often overlook it in our times of need and perplexity, when it would give us an easy mastery of our difficulties. Let us make an application of it to the devotions of the closet.

The sincere Christian, in his approaches to the throne of grace, feels that his success is wholly dependent upon the Divine energy, through Jesus Christ. He has no claims to urge, no faithfulness to plead. He looks upon himself as utterly helpless and unworthy, and is persuaded that he must be renewed and sanctified by an efficiency which is wholly extraneous and beyond his own control. Self-abasement and self-renunciation fill his heart and dwell upon his tongue. Now it is not surprising if he is sometimes so fully occupied with these orthodox and befitting sentiments as wholly to forget another consideration equally just and hardly less important, that prayer is not an isolated single act, wholly independent of the other actions of his life. So far from it, it is intimately connected with his daily walk and conversation, and in a very material point of view, it is little else than a summing up before God his current history. The success of his devotions is far more dependent upon his habitual deportment and tempers than upon any fervors or faith of the closet. A day that has been spent in folly and sin can not be closed in profitable and consolatory devotion. It has reared up a barrier in the way of access to God. It may furnish many an affecting theme for confession and repentance—and forgiveness is never far from the humble penitent—but it is vain to imagine that there is in the Gospel any provision in virtue of which we may pass from the contaminating scenes of worldly pleasure into communion with the Holy Spirit. None but the watchful, the pure, and the painstaking can profit greatly by prayer. Prayer has no efficacy to atone for

the obliquities of a perverse life, nor can it find pardon for sins into which we have contentedly fallen to-day, and which we have no purpose to shun to-morrow. "We know that God heareth not sinners."

Piety must reach somewhat beyond the closet. The whole life is a preparation for judgment, and each successive portion of it may be regarded as a preparation for that solemn account which a Christian exacts from himself, and renders to God at every recurring season of prayer. Devotion will be profitable according only as the deportment has been blameless and the motives pure.

What a contrast is observable in some professors between the earnestness of their prayers and the carelessness of their lives. They seem to imagine that the whole Christian warfare is a vocation of the closet. There, and there alone, they seek to nurture their Christian virtues, to mortify the deeds of the flesh, and to offer themselves a living sacrifice to God. In the common pursuits of life they are guided by common maxims, and animated by the common spirit. In the closet only they do the works of Him that hath called them.

They pray for grace to subdue the evil propensities which they voluntarily indulge throughout the rest of the day. They cherish pride, and pray for humility. They eagerly court the applause of the world, and make it the main element of their happiness, and pray for heavenly affections. They indulge in sinful tempers and passions, and pray, perhaps with strong cries and tears, to be made meek, and childlike, and patient. Parents pray that their children may be delivered from worldly vanities, and converted to God, and at the same time indulge them in all the frivolous and corrupting excesses of the fashionable world. And all this startling inconsistency is often united with the most perfect sincerity. Who has not seen it? What minister has not mourned over this tendency in professing Christians to disjoin their praying and their acting altogether, to give their devotions to God, and the rest

of their time to the world? There lies the great secret of barren devotions and unanswered prayers. We separate what God has joined together. We pray perhaps enough, and with sufficient fervor. There may be no want of confidence, which easily passes for faith. We are not ashamed of the cross, but rather glory in our Christian profession. What we lack is holy living. It is this want that spoils our prayers in the sight of God. It is a good rule that the life should be ordered with special reference to the objects which we seek to obtain by prayer.

Do you desire humility? Watch, then, against the risings of pride, condescend to men of low estate, and meddle not with things that are too high for you. Do you pray to be delivered from covetousness? You will do so in vain if you at the same time give your nights and your days to the pursuit of wealth, remain unfeeling and penurious, unmindful of the starving poor and the perishing heathen. Do you pray for the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit? Your prayer will be wholly in vain, if it be not accompanied with a denying of all ungodliness and worldly lusts, with unceasing watchfulness against anger, envy, and covetousness—with the diligent cultivation of all the fruits of the Spirit.

The Gospel is very plain and practical. It is accommodated, not indeed to the corruptions, but to the constitution of man; and it acts in admirable harmony with the laws of our moral and physical nature. For purposes infinitely wise and merciful, God has attached conditions to the bestowment of His gifts. In religion, as in nature, the richest blessings are denied to sloth and indifference, and are given to the willing and the obedient. Nor are they, on this account, less valuable and free, or less honorable to the Divine benevolence. Prayer, and faith, and salvation by Christ, have been mystified by the ingenious speculations of theologians, and still more by the perverseness of a practical Antinomianism; but, after all, who that has attempted to follow Christ in a sin-

cere and intelligent obedience, has wandered far from the path of safety? Who that has made the New Testament the law of his life, and humbly offered his prayers in the name of Jesus, has been left to darkness and despair? Be assured, my brother, your unfruitful, comfortless devotions originate in the unholiness of your life. You are instructed in the way of truth. You are well read in doctrines. You have not attempted to lay another foundation than that which is laid—Christ Jesus our Lord. But with all your orthodoxy, your practice is sadly defective. The Gospel is designed for every-day use. Carry its unbending precepts with you into your shop, to the market, to your farm. Let its meekness support you under provocation. Let its charity modify your opinions and cool your resentments. Exercise its forgiving temper toward your enemies, and cherish its strong sympathies for the souls of all men. Feel for the honor of Christ, and labor for the spread of the Gospel. Remember God all the day long, and let all things, even eating and drinking, be done to His glory. Let religion choose your associates and order your speech. Let it rule your household and train your children. See, then, if your prayers are any longer unavailing, if your comforts be few, if the Spirit be withheld, and the promises made of no effect. See if there be any longer a difficulty or a mystery in the exercise of filial confidence and saving faith in a crucified Redeemer with whom you have walked and communed all the day, and to whom you have rendered a sincere and cordial, though imperfect obedience.

XXXV.

ADVANTAGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF DWELLERS IN CITIES.*

A city that is set on a hill can not be hid.—MATT., v., 14.

IT should, I think, be esteemed a high privilege to spend one's days in a populous, thriving metropolitan city. All things considered, this must be regarded the most favorable situation for the satisfactory attainment of the great ends of our being. It is better, no doubt, for the physical constitution that infancy and childhood should be passed in the country; and our school-boy days are likely to be more pure, as well as more blithesome, spent amid green fields, and woodlands, and bubbling springs, and mountain breezes. When, however, this initiatory period of life is passed, and the body and mind are beyond these earlier stages of development, there is no field either for discipline, or action, or enjoyment like the thronged centres of population and business, where the battle of life is waged upon the largest scale, and the incentives to strenuous effort are ever the most urgent and significant. Not only the lower wants and necessities of man, but his more refined tastes and higher aspirations, find, in the metropolis, the readiest and most abundant means of gratification. In all that concerns personal dignity and mere external accomplishments, the citizen possesses similar advantages over the denizens of rural villages and agricultural districts. He has ever before him the best models for imitation; he acquires self-possession and ease by living in the public eye, and acting his part in the presence of spectators. Here are the

* Delivered in the Methodist Episcopal Church, in Ninth Street, New York, on the evening of January 3d, 1849.

best means for the cultivation of the intellect and the acquisition of knowledge. Here are libraries, literary associations, pictures, statuary, and architecture — facilities unknown in the country, or, at least, most inadequately enjoyed. The ablest men in the several arts and sciences, the most learned and famous in the professions, the most eloquent speakers, and the most attractive writers, congregate in the great cities, and diffuse among their teeming population such degrees of intelligence and refinement as are never found in rural districts. Here, too, is the store-house of a country's wealth —and here the nation's great financial operations, and industrial and economical enterprises, are carried on or controlled. It is the common centre of trade and intercourse with foreign nations and with distant interior regions. Great questions in politics, great schemes for benevolent activities and social meliorations, here find their origin or their chief development. Add to these sources of intelligence and power that the city gives to a nation all its books, all its periodicals, and all its newspapers—in other words, gives to it its ideas and its passions, and we may form some conception of the influence which a great city exerts upon its own population and upon the world.

The masses of the city are more highly educated than the people of the country. I do not mean to affirm that they learn more of arithmetic or grammar, or of any branch of science or literature. That is a question of less moment to them than to the children of a rural neighborhood, for their intellectual powers find development in the exciting, inspiring circumstances with which they are surrounded. They learn without study, and become educated without teachers or books. They live and work hard by the richest sources of information; and subjects that remain all Greek to wondering countrymen as long as they live, are as familiar to the citizen in the same grade of life as the aspect of the tasteful squares and splendid edifices which he walks by to his daily

tasks. He is insensibly penetrated, and becomes knowing by the intelligence which floats upon the atmosphere he breathes. He is enlightened by the beams which fall upon him from so many luminous objects. He acquires tact and shrewdness by perpetual contact with men and things. He grows dexterous, clever, and self-relying in habitual conflicts with the competition and cunning through which he fights his way to success or to his daily bread.

If so many powerful influences are able to impress a peculiar character on the population of a large city, they produce effects no less certain and decided, though less observable, upon a nation. The city governs the country—not, for the most part, directly and palpably, but in reality, and, in the long run, it certainly and always rules. The city may be in a political minority. The country may follow a different party leader, and contend for the mastery under another banner; yet the metropolis really controls all important measures. Its politicians, its newspapers, and its gold settle the great features of the nation's policy, and decide those questions of trade, industry, and finance through which the government of civilized nations chiefly act upon the well-being of an entire people.

The revolutions which have, within a few brief months, swept over the face of Europe, and overturned or remodeled the governments of a hundred millions of men, lend striking illustrations to our inquiry, for they have been achieved by the people of half a dozen cities. Berlin, with less than three hundred thousand inhabitants, has given a Constitution to Prussia and liberty to Germany. The populace of Vienna, led on by the students of its University, have shaken the ancient throne of the Austrian Cæsars, and raised a cry for freedom which has been re-echoed by forty millions of bondmen, from the mountains of Bohemia and the Tyrol to the frontiers of Turkey. Rome, with scarcely one material element of power or influence, has, by moral force and the strength of a

venerable name, aroused all Italy, and transformed a race of passive, and, as the world thought, contented slaves, into one embattled host, ready to strike or die for liberty and independence.

Paris, however, and the incredible events of the three days of February, offer the most effective illustration, for Paris has not only revolutionized France, but Europe. One hundred thousand of her poor citizens, clad in coarse blue cotton, and toiling for a miserable subsistence at two francs a day, were able to subvert an ancient throne, and banish the most powerful king on earth by a single effort; and all France made haste to adopt the act as her own, as if the nation had no mind or will but that of the metropolis. With such facts, vital and glowing, from the history of yesterday, I need not refer to former ages, when Athens, Carthage, and Rome gave laws to the whole known world. From the first, great cities have been the rulers of mankind, the scourges or benefactors, the despoilers or the civilizers of the race.

I will not affirm that metropolitan influence in this country is precisely the same, in kind and degree, as it is in the Old World, or as it was in ancient times. It is doubtless greatly modified by our civil institutions. It might not be able to produce political revolutions, for such material changes are impossible when suffrage is universal and majorities rule. With this single exception in favor of civil government, I see no reason to doubt that New York exercises over several millions of people, scattered over this and other states of this great republic, an influence as decided and effectual as that of ancient Rome over the provinces of her empire, or of Paris over modern France. And this influence, great as it already is, is destined to increase from year to year with every augmentation of business and foreign intercourse — with every new steamer and rail-road by which the remote dependencies of this powerful social and moral empire are brought into closer intimacy with the great centre and heart of the system.

I have already been anticipated in my inferences from the preceding statement. *Great cities have an important mission to fulfill.* Immense responsibilities rest upon them, and, most of all, upon their Christian inhabitants. City churches are in a sense deeply, fearfully impressive "lights of the world"—"cities set on a hill which can not be hid." They owe great duties to the world. They will be held accountable for a high style of Christian performances. They ought to be in all respects *model churches.* Their order, their activity, their earnestness, their sacrifices, or their want of such virtues, will certainly impress themselves upon the entire Christianity of the land. They are sacredly bound, in the economy of Divine Providence, to be first in every holy enterprise—the most intelligent, the most active, the most liberal, the most persevering promoters of all good works. They are the eyes and the ears of the Church through which it communicates with the wants of the world. The world's representatives congregate in their midst, and through them make their first appeal to the heart of the general Church. Christians in large cities are the depositories of a large proportion of the wealth which God has intrusted to his people —a plain intimation of their duty as the stewards of such a trust, and of the equitableness of that claim which all benevolent enterprises are ever laying at their door. Metropolitan Christians need, for the discharge of these and similar obligations, intelligent, stable, and earnest piety. Lukewarmness and slack performance of duty, in such a quarter, become high crimes, not only against the souls of the delinquents, but against the hopes and the happiness of the human race.

I am not confident that these will not appear to some, who have thought superficially upon the subject, exorbitant demands upon metropolitan piety. Not so, at any rate, the manifestly reasonable claim that city Christians should devote themselves earnestly to the evangelization of their neigh-

bors and fellow-citizens. To this duty they are bound, not only on the general grounds of their obligation to save as many souls as they can, but it is specially theirs from their providential position, and their intimate relations with the country. They have charge of the sources of influence, and it behooves them to see to it that the world is not inundated with poisoned streams. The city has hitherto been the grand mart from which the country is supplied with all sorts of corrupting agencies. Its teeming press fills the whole land with vile books, and profligate, infidel periodicals.

The country sends to the city pure Croton water to quench its thirst, and sparkle in its fountains, and blanch its tarnished vestments, and wash its operatives; and in return for such a boon, its quiet hamlets and rural villages are drenched with French brandy and West India rum. Cast-off stage-players and pickpockets of the second class, who lack enterprise or talent for the higher walks of their profession, swarm out of the large towns to batten upon our green fields, and set up altars to Moloch in the shade of our ancestral elms. It is only in the impure atmosphere of large cities that human society gives birth to such loathsome things as *model artists*, which, like some fatal diseases, once generated, overspread the land, and exhaust themselves in tainting inexperienced youth, and grieving pious and venerable age. It has long been with me a subject of interesting inquiry, whether something more effectual might not be done to counteract and diminish these tremendous evils, by a more thorough evangelization of the neglected classes in the large towns. I do not imagine that thieves, and actors, and debauchees are likely to become good Christians under any system of benevolent or evangelical effort. Reformatory processes, however, are likely to find a more hopeful field of operation among the neglected classes whose patronage gives support to corrupting amusements and occupations. If some efficient system of missionary effort and domiciliary visitation could be set on

foot so vigilant and comprehensive as to embrace the workshops, and populous manufactories, and crowded resorts of a large town, and to meet, and welcome, and watch over the army of young persons of both sexes from the country who throng its approaches in quest of employment as clerks, journeymen, apprentices, domestics, and laborers, the desolating flood might at least be checked, and in time dried up by cutting off its sources of supply. Such an experiment, wisely organized, and prosecuted strenuously and upon a large scale by the co-operation of all the Churches and all benevolent individuals, could not fail of producing the most salutary results. Its effects would become visible in the city in the diminished number of prisoners and paupers, of theatres, grog-shops, and brothels, in fuller churches and lighter taxes, while the country would rejoice in its exemption from the tide of bad influences and bad men with which the overflowing town reacts upon its unprotected haunts and firesides. Such an enterprise would deserve a place of honorable distinction by the side of the American Bible Society; and it remains for some large-hearted, Heaven-directed philanthropist to win an immortal crown by devising such a scheme, and carrying it onward over the indolence, and selfishness, and skepticism of the times, to benignant and triumphant successes.

There is another view of city evangelization, incidental, like those I have already adverted to, but not, on that account, the less important as a fact, or authoritative as a motive. The immense immigration from the Old World which is constantly pouring new and heterogeneous elements into the bosom of American society, and rapidly modifying the sentiments and character of the entire nation, makes its first lodgment in our great commercial towns. As those who are on the sick-list are stopped at the Narrows to be cured of their diseases, and to inhale the health-giving air of the New World, so the whole mass of poverty, ignorance, and

vice which is landed on our shores, is detained in the city long enough to give out its infection and imbibe the new ideas and habits which are likely to give complexion to a new career. The neglected strangers naturally form their first and most intimate associations with the most depraved and neglected portion of the people. This class of our citizens become a model school in which the ignorant Irish and Germans receive their first lessons in American liberty, morals, and religion. They derive their earliest ideas of our Protestantism from a race of nominal Protestants, but real heathen, and these are the impressions which they are to bear with them into our inland towns and Western prairies, for the most part ineradicable by our subsequent Christian efforts. I seem to myself to have pointed out an evil of the most practical kind and the most appalling magnitude. It is for the Christians whom God has placed as watchmen and conservators of these great receptacles and thoroughfares, as far as in them lies, to see to it that neither the republic nor the Church receive any damage.

I have unquestionably omitted, so far, the most obvious as well as the strongest argument in favor of evangelizing efforts in our cities. I do not intend to dwell upon it now. I have a right to take for granted, what all your humane and Christian instincts incessantly urge upon you, that you hold yourselves to be under sacred obligations to labor diligently to save the souls for whom Christ died. And when these impenitent sinners, whom God thus leaves to your Christian faithfulness, are the men and women who occupy your kitchens and work-shops, and throng your side-walks, there is still less need of argument and exhortation to excite sympathies which are more powerfully awakened by sights and sounds that every where address the watchful eye and the listening ear. Those who acknowledge the voice of Christ in the great command, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature," will make no difficulty in recognizing as

within the scope of this broad commission the wretched hovels, and cellars, and garrets, where, within ten minutes' walk of their own dwellings, they may carry Christianity to as arrant heathens as ever burned incense before an idol. Every large town has such a class of unevangelized people, partly of those who have been neglected by the Church, and who have abandoned themselves, after the Gospel, in such forms and through such *media* as it has been able to assume in their presence, has exhausted itself upon them; and partly of those who have been wholly overlooked in our evangelizing plans, and left to grow up, and live, and die in the grossest ignorance and impiety, under the stunning peals of church bells, and under the eyes of zealous disciples of Christ, who habitually and calmly pass them on the side-walk in their way to the Lord's house.

Here, then, is a neglected field, rank with brazen infidelity, and gross profligacy, and deep ignorance of God, next door to every professor of religion, and comprehended within the borders of each Christian congregation. It is not an inviting field; it is too far gone by our negligence. Poisonous plants have struck too deep a root into its hard, ungenial soil to encourage the hope of easy or very satisfactory results to reclaiming labors. It is enough to fill the heart of a good man with despair to fall in with a company of these hardened, sharp-visaged, practiced, care-worn, outcast heathen, returning from a Sunday's excursion in the country, pedestrian or by steam, equipped with fishing-rods, and fowling-pieces, and long, ponderous bludgeons, with here and there a green bough or bunch of flowers in the hand of a child or a female, stolen, as one must fear, by parent or lover, as a memorial of the day. You are compelled, in advance, to suspect that these men carry in their heads an epitome of Fanny Wright's Lectures, or a Universalist *Vade-mecum*, to arrest your exhortation withal. God's image, I think, was never more marred, and his green earth never less like Eden, than they appear in one of

these family groups, unless it may be in those who prefer the purlieus of a grog-shop to the Sunday excursion; or in those wretched human habitations, such as may be found on both sides of your plebeian streets, where solitary intemperance keeps domestic orgies, and Sunday comes cheered by no better privileges than an ampler supply of intoxicating beverage, and the leisure which permits wife and children to share in the revel. In sparsely-peopled regions, indifference and hostility to religion are less able to fortify themselves by society and combination, and they seldom present so bold a front or such formidable obstacles to evangelizing efforts. To counterbalance this disadvantage, however, the neglected classes of the city are more accessible. They are within reach of reformatory exertions—are ever under the eye of that Christian sympathy which stands pledged in the Gospel economy to pity and relieve them. In the country, the individual, and the family especially, when not under the socializing influences of religion, is more isolated and independent. Each cultivates his own acres and follows his own tastes, with few calls or occasions to mingle in the crowd and sacrifice individual will, whether for purposes of amusement or business. In the city, men of various classes and occupations have many common interests and ties, and are brought into contact by the manifold urgencies and attractions of both private and public affairs; still, it must be admitted that the social classification is much more thorough and distinct, and defended by harder and bolder lines. Irreligious, wicked men find a refuge against the disquietude of their moral wants, as well as the aggressions of evangelizing zeal, in the number and hardihood of the club or *set* into which the profligate and the ungodly are ever drawn by their strongest instincts. These, hardly less than vicious habits and corrupt principles, constitute powerful barriers to be overcome by our evangelizing efforts.

In whatever aspect we contemplate this great subject of

the evangelization of populous cities, one suggestion forces itself upon every thoughtful mind. It is that much of the work to be accomplished can only be done by earnest, painstaking, persevering individual agency. It is a prime duty to build new churches, and supply preachers and pastors for unprovided sections and suburbs; but the most difficult part of the work still remains to be done, that of inducing sinful and depraved men and women to frequent these churches and listen to this ministry. This is an achievement, not for the professional missionary, but for all the men and women into whose hearts God has been pleased to infuse any measure of the missionary spirit. It need not be attempted by any who are not prepared to work by that model proposed in the New Testament, when the master of the feast sent out the whole posse of his servants into the highways, to "compel" them to come in and furnish with guests his well-spread table. All God's people must become prophets, and all the manifold relations which in civilized communities bind man to man, must be pressed into the service of this stirring enterprise. The ties that bind the rich to the poor—the ties of the benefactor and the beneficiary, the employer and the employed, the teacher and the pupil, the professional man and his clients and patrons, the tradesman and his customers, and all the additional ties which the most fervent charity knows how to create or strengthen, must become *media* of approach for the Gospel of Christ in its aggressive movements on this long-neglected field.

The Church has perhaps prematurely concluded that nothing effectual can be done to save the adult portion of the large class of impenitent sinners comprehended in this discussion, and in the plans of home missionary labor. Had we the statistics of the imperfect and partial attempts already made in the right direction, I think it would appear that the money and efforts thus expended have proved a remunerating outlay. These successes are immediately absorbed by

the churches to which the converts are made over, and do not always appear in a form most adapted to excite hope and encourage additional labors. Every instance of success under circumstances of difficulty and discouragement ought to be hailed as a signal triumph of the Gospel. To pluck one such brand from the burning, to rescue one such outcast reprobate family, to impress upon it the lineaments of virtue and humanity, and give to its coming generations a heavenward tendency, should be esteemed a good reward for the toils and sacrifices of years. Scanty, however, as may be the successes of the city missionary among the adults whom former neglect and former miscarriages have bequeathed to his sympathies and his faithfulness, they are yet very great and encouraging in comparison with those of the missionary to the heathen. In those distant, blighted fields, it is no unusual thing to labor through painful years before a single convert is made. Let the home laborer think of this and be strengthened. *He* is permitted to dwell among his own people, and to enjoy, in the sympathy and communion of the Churches, the most precious solace and support which Christ provides for his servants here on earth.

In city evangelization, however, as in every other wise plan for saving souls, our chief hope is with the young—children, who are emphatically the heritage of the Lord. In patient efforts to train them to intelligence and purity lies the chief hope of the Gospel—a hope that will not be disappointed. Labor to save the children of the impenitent and the profligate, and you can not labor in vain. If the parents will not be saved, ply their children with every Christian art and blandishment. Seduce them with the voice of the charmer. Take them with guile. Draw them to the haunts of holy pleasure and divine pastimes. You will insure a great triumph by such a course of policy. Ply the Sunday-school machinery incessantly and strenuously, year in and year out. Scour every barn, and hovel, and garret. Send your spies

into all the borders of the Canaanite. Rescue the innocents who are about to be made to pass through the fire to Moloch, and bring them to Jesus, that he may lay his hands upon them, and bless them. These are the true tactics of the Church, and this the true method of procedure for those who would be wise to win souls.

I claim for the theory I am so earnestly recommending apostolical authority—a great thing nowadays—and a thoroughly evangelical spirit, but I lay no claim to original discovery. It has often been tried, and always with success. From a Report of the Ladies' Home Missionary Society, which has been placed in my hands, I learn that the line of evangelical effort I have recommended is precisely that in which this Church and congregation had their origin. If I rightly comprehend the statement, this good work was begun by a zealous man, who started a Sunday-school with four poor children in an old brewery. Out of that old brewery and that handful of children have come up, not without much patience, and prayer, and discouragement, and many sacrifices and tears, this commodious Church and respectable congregation. See what God hath wrought—ay, and see, too, His way of working, and learn from his own operations how He means to work, and what must be the mode and measure of your co-operation if you would become successful co-workers with Him.

We are led at last to the special objects of this evening's assemblage. The people who worship here have toiled for years to plant a Church in this neighborhood as a home for their Sunday-school and their meetings for worship—a sort of garrison where they may congregate for both defense and aggression—a strong-hold into which they may fetch their prey for safe preservation. They have been, as I am told, very zealous for the Lord of Hosts in this matter, and while they have drawn liberally upon their own means and efforts to erect and sustain this Church, they have likewise drawn

upon faith, and contracted a debt which they honored God and their brethren enough to believe they should be helped to pay. God has already helped them much, and to-night they come before this assembly to ask for an instalment of what it has never been doubted they would receive from your liberality.

My time has expired, and none is left for framing an argument on the subject; but I venture to suggest to the citizens of New York here present, that they had better contribute to build churches than be taxed to support penitentiaries. They will find it more economical, in the long run, to pay something freely for training up the children of the poor to honesty and religion in the Sunday-school, than to support a House of Refuge for them, with its train of superintendents, physicians, and guardsmen—all to give the hopeful vagabonds such an initiation into life as may fit them in maturer years to occupy the penitentiary with a due grace—a consummation to which every body knows that municipal charities have a very direct tendency. To all my Christian auditors I appeal in consecrated words: "Bear ye one another's burdens." These brethren have been zealous for God, and have brought serious pecuniary burdens upon themselves. I think them entitled to both sympathy and aid; and I think the lovers of God in the neighborhood ought to deal considerately by them—liberally, I mean—as those who feel a common interest in the enterprise.

I wish to say to the brethren themselves that I trust they are not sorry either for what they have given, or done, or pledged to this work. In the first place, God helps those who toil for His cause. This is a guaranty of prosperity. Your cause, being God's cause, is as likely to prosper as any other. These one or two hundred Christian men and women, who think they can do, and who resolve to do something for religion, can do it. It is a great matter to have people engaged in such an enterprise who have a mind to work—

who consider the cause of God about as much a concern of theirs as their childrens' food or clothing. Such people, when they say, "Give us this day our daily bread," mean, also, give us the means to support the Gospel among us, and that implies a great power and resource. It makes God a partner in the enterprise, and such a firm must prosper.

XXXVI.

CHRISTIAN OBLIGATIONS, OR THE FATE OF ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA.

Will a man rob God?—MALACHI, iii., 8.

THE brief but tragic history in the beginning of the fifth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles contains, and was designed to inculcate, lessons of great practical importance, which are too frequently overlooked by the Church. The perusal of this portion of Holy Scripture never fails to fill the mind of a child with strong emotions. I can well remember the mingled awe and wonder with which, in my early days, I was wont to meditate on the fate of Ananias and Sapphira; and to the present moment I can never read this terrible narrative without a feeling with which no other portion of the New Testament inspires me. No doubt this scripture is profitable for instruction in righteousness, and will reward the humble inquirer with practical suggestions of great moment.

What, then, was the grievous offense for which these guilty disciples were cut off at a stroke, and doomed to imperishable ignominy throughout all the succeeding ages of the Church? *They had voluntarily pledged a portion of their property* ("*a possession*") *to the promotion of the cause of Christ, and declined to fulfill the obligation* ("*kept back a part of the price*"). This constituted the whole offense. The falsehood, which became necessary in consummating the fraud, was not a distinct crime. Its guilt had already been incurred in the

deliberate purpose to do wrong, when "Satan filled their hearts to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price." If this is all, why, I am asked, was a retribution so fearful visited upon an offense usually esteemed so slight? We ought not, perhaps, to consider the punishment of these offenders as peculiarly severe. It was *marked* and *signal*, in order that it might be memorable. An impressive example seems to have been necessary, in order to guard the infant Church from demoralization, and as a perpetual warning to Christians of all ages to beware of a sin to which the hearts of men are strongly, because constitutionally disposed. Still we are to remember that the death of the body does not rank high in the scale of Divine retribution; and we ought rather to "fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." The sin of Ananias was, no one can doubt, often repeated in the primitive Church, and it is nowadays frightfully prevalent, yet we hear of no other such terrible and *visible* display of God's displeasure. Like other transgressions, this is now left to follow the general principle of the Divine administration, and to find its reward in the retributions of eternity. One signal instance, however, is enough to admonish us of the utter abhorrence in which God holds this offense against his sacred claims and dignity, and we are at liberty to inquire in what its peculiar enormity may be supposed to consist.

1. It conflicts with the essential arrangements of the Gospel, and would render its diffusion throughout the world impossible. God has pleased—we need not stop to inquire for what reasons—to make the propagation of true religion dependent upon the voluntary efforts and offerings of His people. He calls the preacher, but "how can he preach except he be sent?" Few, comparatively, need be apostles or missionaries, in the proper sense of those terms, but multitudes must co-operate in their support and maintenance. The kingdom of Christ must triumph by the diffusion of Bibles, by

Christian institutions, by churches, by schools, by costly charities, and yet it has no material resources. Its appeal is to the hearts of Christians. The holy Spirit enlightens and sanctifies believers, in order that they may live unto Christ, and their voluntary sacrifices, their spontaneous vows, constitute the sole revenue of the Gospel. Every one is left to give as he purposeth in his heart. Is it a light offense to rob the Gospel treasury, to withhold the means by which it triumphs, on which the salvation of souls depends?

2. What we have consecrated to God and the service of religion is no longer our own. When once the purpose is formed and the vow made, there is an end of all power over the consecrated object. In the sight of God it is no better than sacrilege to employ, for our own purposes, what has thus been set apart for the satisfaction of religious obligations. It is *corban*, and we may not divert from the altar what, in the intent and spirit of the thing, we have alienated forever. All this is true, before we have proceeded beyond the religious, inward act of consecration. When this purpose is avowed, and a verbal or written pledge has been given before men, we have admitted them to our counsels, and called them to be witnesses of a transaction between our souls and God, and we have, at the same time, incurred an obligation of the most sacred character to co-operate with them in promoting the particular enterprise we have chosen to patronize. No note of hand, no bond for the payment of money, is more imperatively obligatory upon the Christian conscience than these pledges made to our fellow-Christians; but when their religious character as *offerings to God* is taken into the account, I am wholly unable to conceive of a transaction more binding and solemn. Under what pretext does an individual, thus pledged to God and man, claim to release himself from his engagement? Is his promise less binding and sacred because it is made to God? Is he more free because the written document may happen to lack some technical formality? Are these prom-

ises, tried in the court of conscience, subject to the statute of limitation and outlawry? In a word, will a man, a Christian, "rob God?"

3. It was an aggravation of the sin of Ananias that, "in keeping back a part of the price," he *lied to the Holy Ghost*. Some degree of this dreadful guilt seems to me to be involved in this entire class of offenses. Men, for the most part, resolve on offering pecuniary sacrifices in the best moods of their religious feelings. It is only when Christian motives operate with their full force upon the conscience—when Divine light shines with unusual clearness and power, that habitual selfishness relaxes its grasp, and gives play to the highest, heavenliest dispositions of even good men. If we are indebted to the holy Spirit for all holy aspirations and tendencies, we must believe in His very special presence on occasions when the triumph of Christian principle over our fallen nature is most obvious and complete. This is not the less true when the advocacy under which we consent to do our duty happens to be peculiarly able and eloquent. The Spirit of God usually works through human instruments, and, whoever urges the argument, it alone awakens the conscience, and incites to the performance of actions acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. It is in this precise view that the repudiation of pecuniary engagements thus entered upon must be regarded as peculiarly odious in the sight of God. Such pledges not only possess the high, holy character of religious vows, but they constitute, in a high sense, the fruit and the pledge of the Spirit's work; and when, in the hours of returning worldliness and of dimmer manifestation, Christians sometimes allow themselves to question the obligations which they have thus voluntarily assumed—when they complain that they acted under excitement—that the case was overstated—that they did not fully understand the subject, &c., there is always reason to fear that they are adding the highest aggravation to the sin of covetousness. In truth, men usually make these

pledges from the strongest convictions of duty, as thank-offerings to God for his manifold mercies to them and theirs; as free-will offerings to Christ for the promotion of His cause. They are smitten with at least a momentary ambition to glorify the Savior, and have a share in his triumphs. How strange that they should so soon fall back upon low, worldly ground; that they should not rather desire to pitch their tabernacles upon the mount of brighter visions, and dwell there forever.

Our business, however, is with their guilt, rather than with their folly, and this we can not place in a stronger light than that which the previous train of thought reflects upon it.

I would make some practical use of this discussion, and I am much mistaken if it does not yield a stern rebuke of one of the most prevalent, pernicious errors of the present day. For myself, I am constrained to affirm that I believe there is among many professing Christians a criminal and growing disregard of their engagements to the various institutions and enterprises of religion and charity. Subscriptions to build a church, or pay a missionary, or endow a college, are by many looked upon as acts that impose no obligation to pay, if the subscriber shall happen to change his mind, or shall find it inconvenient or disagreeable to part with his money, or shall choose to fall out with the institution or its agent. Payment is often refused or postponed, as if solemn promises and formal signatures were of no significancy after the echo is hushed and the ink is dry, as if being a member of a Christian Church constituted a release from obligations which are the less likely, from their Christian objects, to be enforced in courts of law. It hence occurs that hardly an institution among us is free from the most serious and alarming embarrassments, though nearly every one of them has outstanding dues sufficient to meet their pressing wants, if Christian contributors and debtors would feel it to be as urgent a duty to render unto God the things that are His, as they do to render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's.

Dear Christian friends, you have fallen into a grievous and manifest error, which you will do well to correct before it is too late. Nothing but utter and invincible inability to pay can excuse you in the neglect of such obligations. Indifference to them is positively incompatible with all fair pretensions to the Christian character and hope. How a Christian who neglects these engagements, made under holy impressions, has courage to go to his prayers, to his sacraments, and, above all, how he can go to his last reckoning, I am unable to conceive.

Oh, my brethren, leave no such questions for a dying bed and for the judgment seat, and to dishonor your memory after you leave the earth. The highest morality is the truest, and surely Christ will never recognize as a true disciple of his any man who perseveres in regarding pecuniary obligations incurred on His account as somewhat less binding and sacred than the claims of the marketman or the merchant.

For myself, I have resolved to look over my past life, and see if any unpaid subscriptions or unredeemed pledges are outstanding against me, with a full determination to pay to "the uttermost farthing." I dare not abide the final issue with this burden on my conscience, for I must meet it before a tribunal where nothing will stand the test but TRUTH IN THE INWARD PARTS.

END OF VOL. I.

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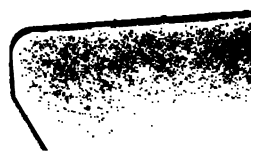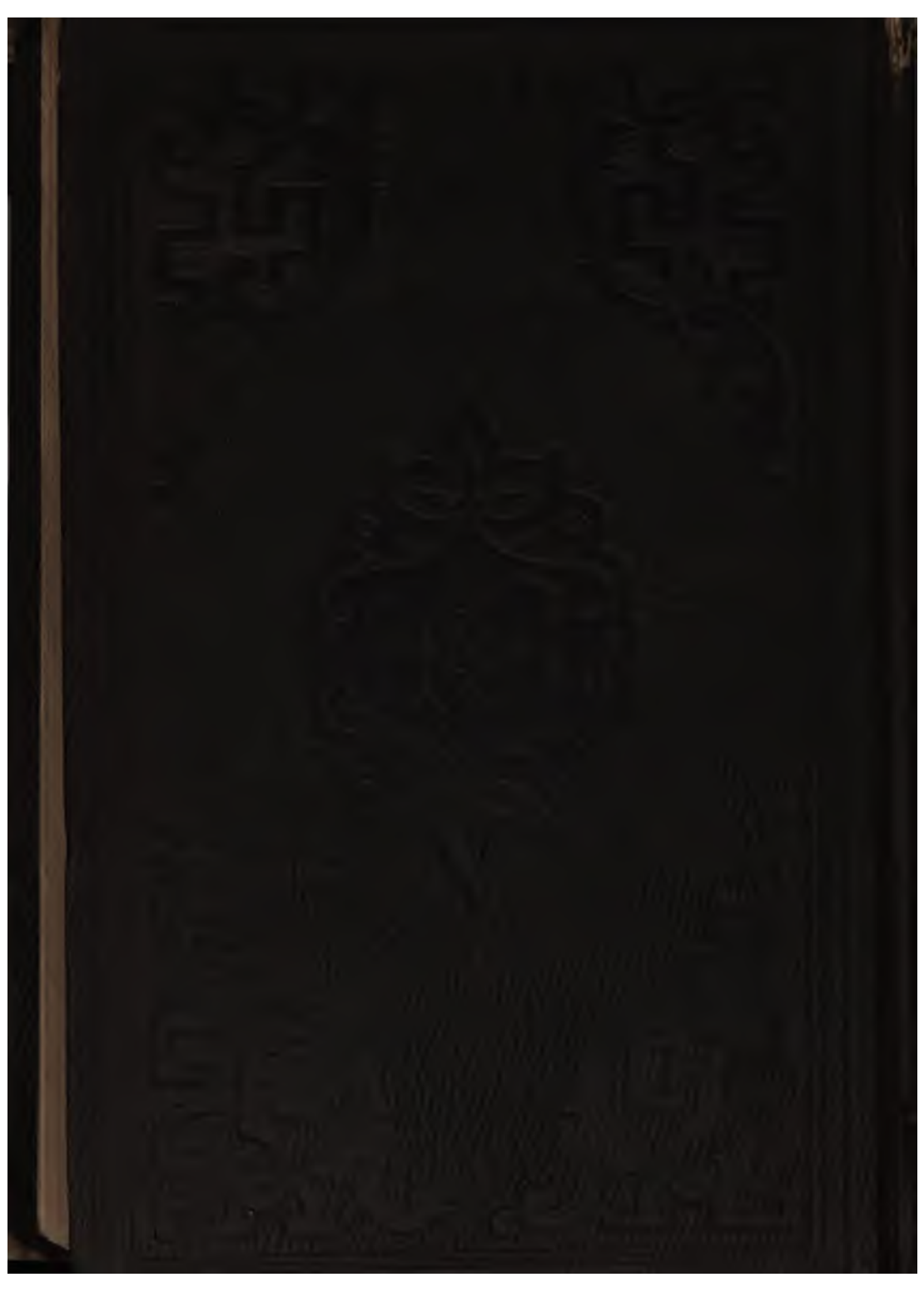
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